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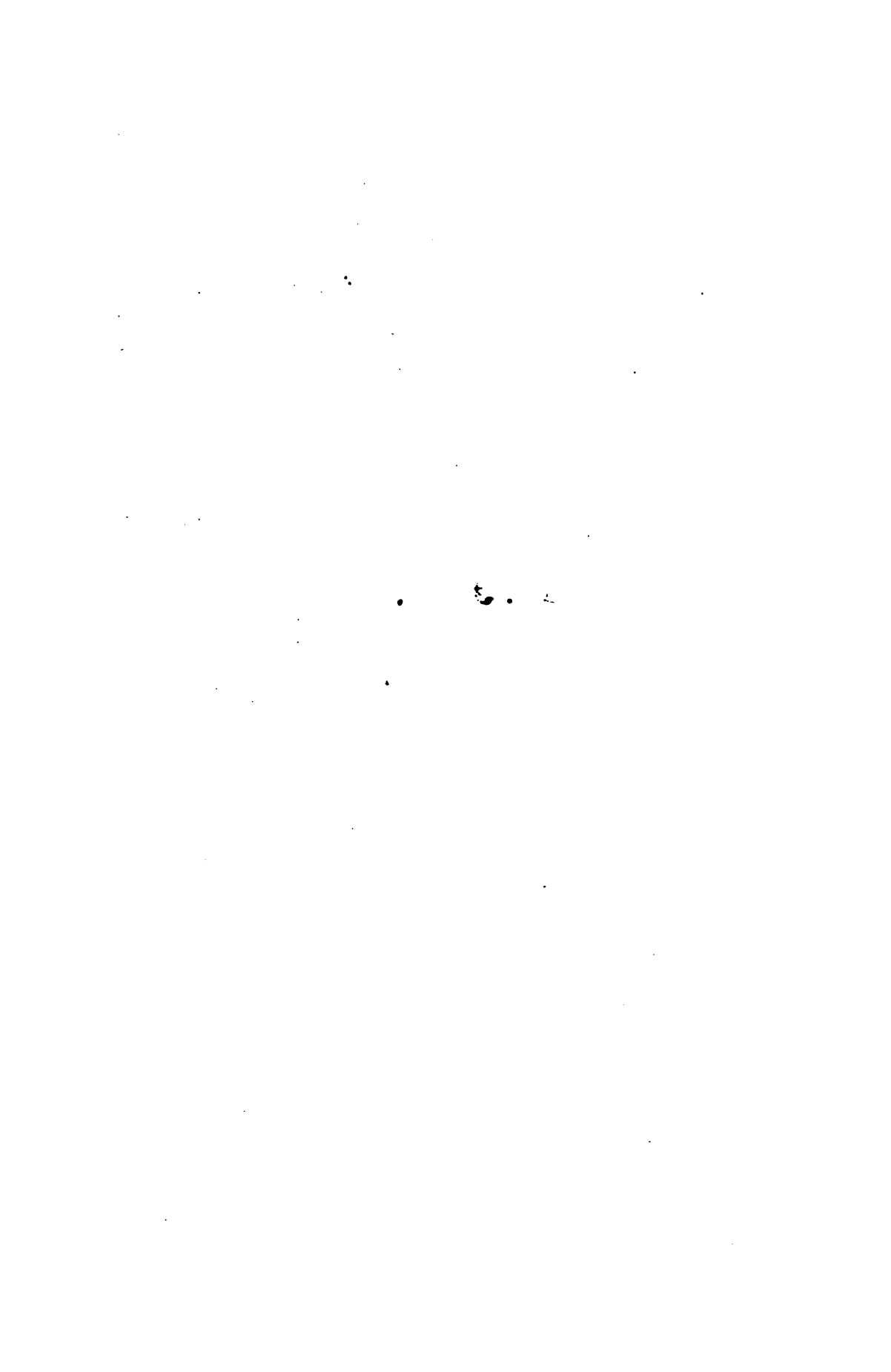
OF GOD;
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DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.
ALSO OF
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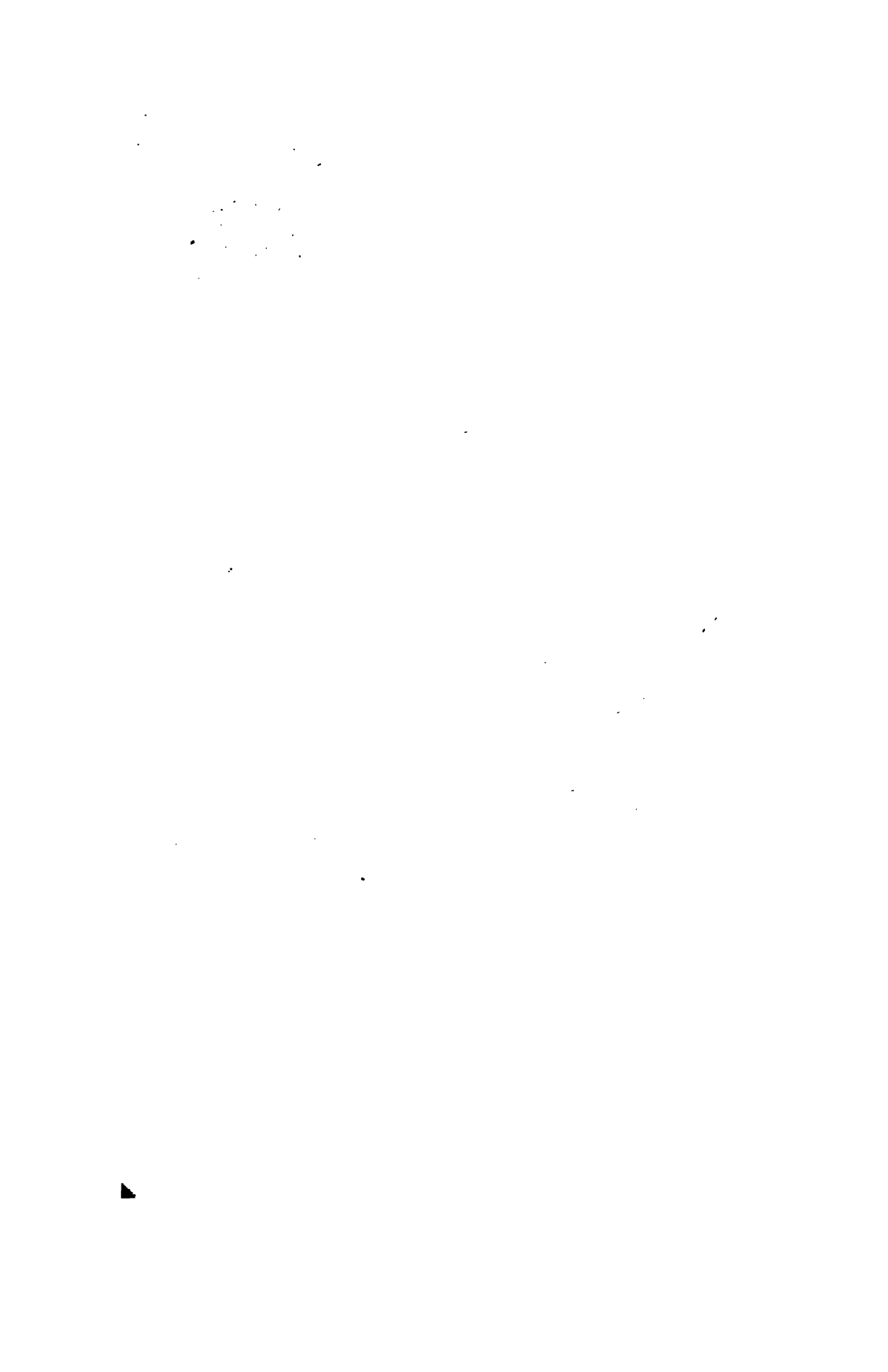
IN A SERIES OF LETTERS TO AN UNDERGRADUATE.



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OF GOD;

OR

OF THE DIVINE MIND.

AND OF THE

DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY,

ALSO OF

PANTHEISM.

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS TO AN UNDERGRADUATE.

BY A

TRINITARIAN.

Quoniam pars horum maxima fallit
Propter opinatus animi, quos addimus ipsi.

LUCRET. iv. 465, 466.

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OF GOD, &c.

LETTER I.

That the doctrine to be here stated is an easy doctrine, and that, though our knowledge, and of God especially, is partial and limited, yet no unintelligible, or indistinct notion or doctrine concerning Him, or indeed concerning anything else, can be properly accounted of as an object of faith.

MY DEAR SIR,

This doctrine of God, or of the Divine mind, on which you consult me, or this inquiry into what we may know, and what we cannot know, either from revelation or reason, concerning the nature or being of our Supreme Parent and Lord, is doubtless always to be approached with the most reverential feeling and care. And yet I can assure you that there is nothing in it, at which any humble and pious searcher for truth needs to alarm himself. Although it has been very unreasonably made one of the hardest, it is yet, if disentangled from the extraneous controversies which have been fastened to it, one of the easiest doctrines imaginable.^a—Strange, indeed, if it were otherwise. For, of what GOD is, almost all may be alike cognizant, or are alike ignorant. We know nothing of

^a "The faith of the Church was at first, and might be still, a natural, easy thing. Heretics brought in philosophy and metaphysics."—Waterland's Works, by Van Mildert, vol. i. pt. ii. p. 213.

him from his works, except through the human analogies of wisdom and goodness, and power and design, a book which is open to almost all. Also, what he hides from us concerning himself, he hides from all equally. He is no less incomprehensible to the divine than to the mechanic, and all mere words about him without knowledge, serve only to darken, not to illuminate. Neither yet is this less true of what he teaches us concerning himself in his word, than of what he teaches by his works. The relations which we bear to him as he is our Father, our Redeemer, and our Comforter, are relations which we are taught, and can only be taught, through human analogies, analogies altogether kindred to those which we discern in his works. And so also in regard to those in themselves necessarily incomprehensible relations which subsist in himself. The relations of the Father to the Son, or of the Son to the Father, or of the Spirit to the mind which breathes it forth—all this is clearly the language of human, and not only of human, but also of very ordinary and intelligible analogies ; not less intelligible than the universally recognised analogy between the immense and incomprehensible designer of the works of creation, and the maker of a watch.

I will, therefore, endeavour to state to you both clearly and easily what our knowledge on this most sacred subject, namely, of God, or what we may call the Divine Nature, really is. Of course I do not mean to state anything of what, as being inscrutable, or incomprehensible, cannot be stated ; but to state what we know, and though briefly, all we know, and where our knowledge ends, of all those relations of God to the world and to man ; or, in other words, of all those analogies between the Divine and the human ; which we are taught either by God's works, or by his word, to know and believe. And

this I will state in especial reference to our own doctrine of the Trinity, which in truth comprises the whole case. You say of this doctrine, that though you would be no less shocked than I should be to surrender it, and feel that you cannot honour Christ enough, unless you honour him as you honour the Father, nor account of the sanctifying Spirit of Grace as less than divine, you have only a confused or indistinct intelligence of the words which you use. I will try to shew you, therefore, both that the meaning which we may and ought to attach to these words is clear and precise, and also that the words themselves are correct words ; and I shall moreover have the more satisfaction in the task which I thus set myself, because it will afford me many opportunities of referring to the book by Professor Norton, which you have sent me.^b It is very able and learned, and is evidently, I think, the work of a good man, and of a man who has the love of truth at his heart. Every thing else which I have to premise, if indeed this may not be collected from what I have already said, is, that I assume throughout the plain logical maxim, that no unintelligible proposition can ever be an object of faith ; and therefore that we can never have any business, and that it never can be of any use, to make any propositions about God or the Trinity, or indeed about anything else, of which we cannot understand clearly what we mean by them. Of course this maxim is not meant to imply, that we can have no belief except of things, *about*, or *concerning* which, we understand everything. If so, we could believe nothing. No truth can possibly be clearer than this ; nor can there be any truth more indispensable to faith itself, or to our protection from the great error or weakness, of either assuming what we cannot know to be

^b Statement of reasons for not believing the doctrine of Trinitarians, by Andrews Norton.—Cambridge U. S. 1833.

true, or of allowing our belief of what we do know to be unsettled by any doubts or guesses as to what we do not know. Doubt or guess is nothing to the purpose. There are no guesses in religion. If there were, we should have as much right to guess a Jupiter, as to guess anything else. There is not, I imagine, any writer or divine, at all deserving on this point of consideration, who will question the truth of this principle.^c

I might now, therefore, go on to apply this principle without delay to the subject before us. But inasmuch as, though I believe the principle itself to be sufficiently recognised, I have never seen it carried out, as I think it ought to be, into every province of knowledge of all sorts, I will, before I proceed further, endeavour to trace out some of its applications, in cases which meet us in common conversation, or in common life. You may, if you please, pass over the rest of this letter, and wait for my next. Everything, which I shall have to say afterwards of God and the Trinity, will go on nevertheless without any real

^c Waterland says as follows :—" Dr. Whitby is very much disturbed that anything should be proposed as an article of faith which is not to be understood, and observes that no man in his sober senses can give his assent to what he understands not. He is certainly very right (I do not say pertinent) in the remark, and I may venture to add that no man, whether *sober* or otherwise, can do it. For undoubtedly, where there is no idea there can be no assent : because assenting to nothing is the very same thing with not assenting. But to clear up this matter," and so forth. (Works by Van Mildert, vol. i. pt. ii. pp. 218, 219.) So again, p. 223, " We assent as far as our ideas reach, for we can do no more. We believe in part what is revealed in part, our faith keeping pace with our ideas, and ending where they end." (Compare p. 227.) I beg to refer also to the very profuse reiterations by Bishop Brown, that all *our* ideas of the Christian mysteries (and he instances particularly the doctrine of the Trinity) are clear and distinct. (Procedure of the Understanding, pp. 128, 129, 131, and Divine Analogy, 168—241, and 525 to the end.) See also Dr. Hey's Lectures on Divinity, book iii. ch. x. sect. 4. Some very incautious *expressions* on this subject are to be found in the valuable " Illustration of the method of explaining the New Testament," by the late Mr. Wilson, of St. John's College, Cambridge, (see p. 317, second edition ;) but I believe it will be found that the real meaning of this acute writer, if carefully sifted, is correct.

impediment. But still I think that what I shall here say may help to clear away some of the obstructions which often prevent even men of able and good minds from discerning, as they ought, the real state both of this our own case, and of many other cases besides.

Unintelligible propositions, then, are not objects of faith. What we do not understand we cannot believe. That is allowed. But what, I now ask, is the case with regard to matters on which we are neither wholly knowing, nor wholly ignorant, or of which our notions are often said to be cloudy, or indistinct? Must our belief be cloudy and indistinct also? This, I imagine, is what is commonly supposed, and thus Dr. Whately, in his note on the word person:^d "The notion thus conveyed is indeed very *faint* and *imperfect*, but is perhaps for that very reason the less likely to lead into error. One may convey to a blind man a notion of seeing, correct as far as it goes, and instructive to him, though very imperfect; if he form a more full and *distinct* notion of it, his ideas will inevitably be incorrect." And so also in speaking of the doctrine of the Trinity,^e as a doctrine decidedly established by Scripture, and yet, as far as relates to the Divine nature, "indistinctly explained." I accept the more readily the illustration here given from the case of the blind man, because I apprehend that it is a case which does furnish, as Dr. Whately supposes, a very exact analogy to our own case of the Trinity.

But still the analogy of the case is not what Dr. Whately supposes it to be. It may be very allowable to talk laxly and popularly of our having indistinct or cloudy conceptions or notions; from which assumption it would, I doubt not, follow that our belief must be indistinct and

^d Logic, p. 327, ninth edit.

^e Ibid, p. 230.

cloudy also. But in tracing the processes of mind, it should, I apprehend, rather be stated that an indistinct or cloudy notion is, in truth, none at all, or that there is no such thing; that what we know, we know—just as what we see, we see; and also, that what we are ignorant of, we are ignorant of; and that there is no medium between the two.^f There is a great deal of knowledge, and a great deal, perhaps much more, of ignorance. There is a great deal of *partial* knowledge, because there are a great many things of which we know only *parts*; and these things, as I have observed, we may say in common speech that we know indistinctly. But the more correct statement would be, that we know the parts of those things which we do know, as well and as distinctly as we know anything else; and that of the other parts we know nothing.^g

If this be doubted, let us come to particulars. We may have an indistinct or cloudy notion, it is said. Let it, then, be the notion of a cloud. But, then, we see a cloud, although its boundaries may be indistinct, as clearly as we can see a cathedral. Or, say that there is an object behind the cloud, and that we do not see what that object is. Yet still we see clearly that there is an object, and our notions are not less clear than our vision. This instance, or example, really comprises the whole case; or, if in

^f ὅτι περ αὐτὸ ἐν τῇ νοητῇ τότῃ πρὸς τὴν νοῦν καὶ τὰ νοούμενα, τοῦτο ταῦτα ἐν τῇ ὁρατῇ πρὸς τὴν ὄψιν καὶ τὰ ὁρώμενα. Οὕτω τοίνυν καὶ τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ἄδερῶν· ὅταν μὲν οὖν καταλάβῃ ἀλήθεια τε καὶ τὸ δὲν εἰς τὸ αὐτὸ ἀπερίσῃται, ἐνόησε τε καὶ ἔγνω αὐτὸ, καὶ νοῦν ἔχει φαίνεται· ὅταν δὲ εἰς τὸ τῇ σκότῃ κεκραμένον, τὸ γιγνόμενον τε καὶ ἀπολλόμενον, δοξάζει τὸ καὶ ἀμβλυώττει, ἄνω καὶ κάτω τὰς δόξας μετέβαλλον καὶ οὐκ ἔχει·—Plat. de Repub. Lib. vi. pp. 68, 70. Massey's edit.

^g "It is not however necessary in order to have clear ideas, that we should know all the common properties of the things which we class together. That would be to have our conceptions of the class complete as well as clear."—Mill's Logic. Vol. ii. Book iv. Chap. ii. § 5.

such a question as this it be unfair to pass by the great name of Locke; he, in treating of the difference between clear and confused ideas, compares the confused idea with the impression of a seal on soft wax. But the existence of an impression, if there be an impression, is no less discernible in soft wax than in hard. The books printed in London, by the excellent printers of the year 1740, are not less *legible* than those in which we recognise the sharper type of Bodoni or Didot.

To return, however, to Dr. Whately, and to take the instance of the blind man with regard to colours, as he has stated it.^h This blind man has an indistinct notion of colours, it is said. I should rather say that he has no notion at all, and that all the knowledge which he has *about* colours may be, and is, so far as he has it, no less clear and definite than his knowledge of any thing else. For what is the knowledge which he has? He learns from his instructors, or he collects from the ordinary use of the language which he speaks, that there exist in objects surface differences, which are cognisable by a sense of which he is destitute. He knows this, so far as he knows it, as well as he knows that a chair or a table have surfaces. Again: he learns that there is a sort of skin which is called fair, and a sort of surface called pink, and another called light blue, which are commonly spoken of as of a delicate character, or as bearing some analogy to the more delicate tones of the human voice, or of a musical instrument; and that there is another colour called scarlet, which, when it is spoken of, brings to his mind the sound of a trumpet. Of these differences of colour he has not a vague or indistinct notion. He has, in strictness, none whatever. All that he knows of them is the verbal difference by which they are severed. Of *that* he has a notion, and a clear

^h *Essays*, Second Series, vii. § 5.

notion, but he has no other; and that notion which he has may still serve him so well, that, if he be a poet, he can write about rose-coloured tints and gloomy black, as well, perhaps, as if he could see what they are.

Again: it has been observed by Berkeley,¹ that it is impossible to form any abstract, or precise, or determinate ideas of either Fate or Chance. And certainly, ideas more vague, if any ideas can be vague, than those which these words suggest to us, cannot be. But, then, all the ideas which we really have of these words, *as far as we have any*, are not less precise and determinate than those which we have of a house or a man. The vagueness is in that we know, or really imagine, or can imagine, *so little* about them.

First, with regard to Fate. One meaning, I suppose, in referring anything to Fate, is that we know nothing about it. Certainly, that confession has a *clear* meaning, not a vague meaning. Or we mean that what has happened, or is to happen, has been ruled by some powerful being or pervading principle. This idea or notion is as clear an idea as possible. As to what that being or principle is, *that* is a different question. And when we come to that question, we either know, or suppose, something clearly intelligible, or we suppose nothing. There is not any medium between the two.—In the same manner, with regard to the use of the word Chance,—I do not apprehend that it is ever used, except with the clear meaning of either confessing our ignorance of the cause, or of excluding design.

So again, in the use of the word Nature. A mother shows to her child a beautiful flower. “How wonderful is nature,” observes the child. “What do you mean by nature?” Probably he means nothing, or he means “how

¹ Alciphron, Seventh Dialogue, Vol. ii. p. 153.

admirable are things that grow of themselves." And he would say the same of stars and mountains, things not made by the hand of man. There is no vagueness in that meaning. Or, if the mother go on to ask, "Do you think this beauty was designed?" the child's answer is again the answer of either apprehension or ignorance, not of any thing between the two. The question recurs, "Designed by whom?" Answer the same. And so again to the question, "What is the designer?" Either the child has the reason to infer a power and goodness analagous to the human, an idea or notion not less clear in him than in the most enlightened philosopher: or he imagines an Olympian Jupiter, or some equivalent: or, he imagines *nothing*.

There is a chapter in Boethius,^k as *cloudy* a chapter, I think, as possible, in which he says that the happy man is a God. It is not easy to say exactly what he means; but it is not the less true that he either means something, or means nothing. Either he means nothing, or he merely means to put two grand titles together, which is much the same as meaning nothing: or else he means that human happiness is akin to the Divine, or the Divine to the human, which is a plain meaning: or else he means Pantheism, some sort of Pantheism, of which he could state what he supposes it to mean: or, if it be said that he has jumbled all these meanings together, he is then come round to no meaning at all.

Again,—"The assent," says Tucker,^l "of many people to truth is like the sight of objects through a mist, and leaves a secret suspicion and mistrust that perhaps they may not be true." Doubtless, there is this suspicion, that these objects, which we see with either the mental or the bodily eye through the mist, may not be true. But what

^k Lib. iii. *prosa* 10.

^l *Light of Nature*, vi. 53.

is it that we suspect? About what we have really *seen* we have no suspicion at all. That we *know*. What we suspect is only some guess, or some opinion, as to those parts of it which we have not seen. But this guess, or this opinion, though perhaps it might have been, and ought to have been, converted into knowledge by a right-minded attention, is, as yet, or till that conversion shall have taken place, a mere nothing: or it may at one time have been promoted to the rank of knowledge, real or supposed, and yet have been willingly forgot afterwards, and therefore abolished. Nevertheless, whatever the actual impression is which is made, and retained, is just as real, just as clear a notion, *so far*, as if all the parts were clearly defined, and we could therefore form a perfectly clear notion of them all.—Or, still again, let us take up a rustic, of whom we may fairly say that he has only a very misty conception of that Christianity which he professes, and which he also believes. He believes in God, and in a future state, and that Christ was, and in Christ's history. No student, or divine, acknowledges or believes as much as that more clearly than he does. But as to *why* he came, if he cannot, or so far as he cannot, state or imagine the reason clearly, he cannot state or imagine it at all. There is positively no meaning, that is, no intellectual meaning, (for I do not deny that there may be a sympathetic affection,^m) in his use of the words that Christ died for his

^m That mere words may, on the principle of association, often excite sensation or affection, even though they mean nothing, or in a degree quite incommensurate with their real meaning, has been often proved. I think it is Dr. Campbell, who, in his very ingenious chapter on the reasons why nonsense so often passes undiscovered by both writer and reader, quotes in illustration of this matter those lines of Virgil, which no one ever either comprehends, or forgets:—

“Tres imbris torti radios,” &c.

But this has not anything to do with any meaning or conclusions properly intellectual, or of the province of truth.

sake, except so far as he has formed some clear notion, false or true, *how* Christ's death benefits him. If it still be said that he has an indistinct notion that Christ has done some great thing for him, though he knows not what, this may be very well in common speech ; but the exact state of the case is, that he has a clear notion that Christ has done some great thing for him, and that his ignorance is total of what he does not know. Wherefore his misty faith, if it be to be so called, is composed of two parts, the perfectly clear and definite, and the total obscure. And so, I imagine, in all other instances, whatsoever.^a

For these reasons I look on it as evident that the recognized doctrine, that we cannot believe what we do not first understand, is not broken in upon in the least by any exception as to cases in which our knowledge is said to be indistinct ; and that so far as it is only partial, we have yet the power of knowing the parts.^o And hence it also follows, that though there are but parts, small parts, of God's ways which we can understand (and therefore believe), yet everything which we can understand may be stated precisely ; or in terms, in which there ought to be no refuge in the indistinctness of our knowledge, for any ambiguity or want of meaning in what we say.

The importance of a clear and accurate intelligence on these points is exceedingly great. People, it is commonly said, and especially the uneducated, ought not to pry too narrowly into the unfathomable nature of God. Many great and enlightened writers say this expressly : and Dr. Whately, I think, leads us to believe that he joins in saying the same. But the truth is, that the nature of GOD is, as I before observed to you, a matter just exactly as fathomable or unfathomable to the learned as to the igno-

^a See Note A at the end of these Letters.

^o See the Second quotation from Waterland, note p. 4.

rant, and to the ignorant as to the learned. Into what is *unfathomable* in it neither the one nor the other ought to pry at all ; and into all which is fathomable in it, it is among the first and cardinal duties of religion to us *all*, and to all equally, to inquire, and to learn to state, for so only can we believe, clearly and accurately. I proceed, therefore, to state all that we do know of this surpassing nature, or rather of its relations to our human kind, as clearly as I can. For the present, however, I must subscribe myself,

Yours always, my dear Sir,

Most faithfully,

*** **

OF OUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

LETTER II.

Of our knowledge of God : and that he is a personal God : and also that he was in Christ personally, or that Christ is God.

MY DEAR SIR,

I now proceed to state, as I proposed, what it is which we really know of God : that is, how far our knowledge of him extends : what it is which either reason or Scripture teaches, or can teach us, both to understand and believe, concerning him. On this point or points, then, all agree quite clearly, as follows ; that he is wise, and good, and just, and true, eternal, infinite. And what we mean by this word infinite is that we can assign no limit to either his wisdom or his power, or to any of those perfections which we, analogising from our own weak nature, our only inlet of knowledge as to what his nature is, accumulate in him as well as we can. Also we know of him, and this, as I shall shew at more length hereafter, we know as clearly as we know or can know of him anything else, that he is a personal God :^a we hold that he is one, that he is the designer of the great

^a See Letters IV. and VIII.

work of creation ; that he is the universal mind, living and acting in everything which he has made. And we also believe, or conceive of him, that he is specifically present in his work in Christ, and in that work of grace in which he mingles with every thought and aspiration of the good man's mind, or in which he identifies himself with every impulse which either turns us to good, or saves from sin. That the God who is in all things, and to whom we look especially as the moral governor of the world, is to be regarded as especially or emphatically present and provident for us in all his moral and religious dispensations, is a truth which no believer in the Christian revelation, and probably no serious and candid thinker, whether Christian or not, will be found to deny. *How* he has done or does this, or by what process of communication ; *how* that effluence goes forth from him, which spake in Christ, or which is received by us, there is none who can tell—we can neither know nor believe. The *process*, if we may use this word, is not less inscrutable than the source of the wind, which bloweth where it listeth, and of which we hear the sound, but of which it is said that we know not whence it cometh or whither it goeth. But that the work itself is a work which is God's doing, and also that portion of his dispensations to us in which he is to be most gratefully and devoutly revered and adored, is not less certain than that the physical creation, although we know not *how* it issued from his mighty hand, is to be referred to him, the author of it.

The only point which remains for consideration is whether or no this one and only God allows us to see anything more or more particularly of him, than is contained in these general truths ; and this question, not here to draw out unnecessarily the links of the argument, resolves

itself into the following : namely, whether or no he shews us himself personally in that revelation or manifestation of his power and holiness which he has given us in Christ. That that mind which is in all things, and which spake by the prophets, and breathes in the hearts of all good men, spake in some sense in Christ, there is not perhaps, as I have already said to you, any who doubts. But may it not still have spoken in him with only that peculiar emphasis and force which belong to the merely human wisdom and goodness of his doctrine and life ? We can assign no difference as to the *process* by which he spake in the prophets, or by which he *was*, as we say, in Christ. And yet we do not call the prophets God, or man divine, except in a highly metaphorical and un mistakeable sense. Why, therefore, Christ ?—To this I answer, in the first place, that though a process or processes may be inscrutable, yet that a fact may be clear, that it may still be a clear fact that Christ assumed for himself personally a divine prerogative, which the prophets did not. But if so, that assumption made him at least A God to his disciples, and therefore God to us : and his assumptions are true. But if he was A God, we know also that he was the Supreme God, for there is none else. We may discard without arguing the hypothesis of a superior and an inferior God, or of a first God and a second. And I may also add that we possess no trace of any similar identification of the Divine with man, or with any other being whatever. Wherefore, (i. e. if this fact be proved of Christ's assuming to himself the divine prerogative,) we are entitled to add to the doctrine of God's personality, the doctrine of his specific personalisation in Christ, and this in a sense which makes Christ the just object of worship or religious dependance, or in which we account of him as actual God. And this conclusion will not be the

less certain, because the way or the process by which he is thus identified with God is allowed to be a way or a process which we cannot scrutinize. I will therefore now go on without delay to the proof of the position which I have thus made, that Christ did in fact assume and exercise the divine prerogative. I will proceed subsequently to the direct affirmations of his Divinity, which are made expressly in various passages of Scripture, and especially in the Preface to St. John, affirmations which reflect, I think, on this same doctrine a most satisfactory light. But I look on the proof which I shall allege in the first place, of his assuming and exercising the divine prerogative or attributes, as constituting a stronger and more undeniable evidence of his divinity than even the most explicit affirmation of it, from the most irresistible authority, is or can be. I have not, myself, indeed, any doubt whatever but that the declarations of Scripture that the word was God, and with God from the beginning, are clear and relevant. But still a philosophy might perhaps be invented, or a theory constructed, by which to evade them. It may be said, or imagined, that they are based on hypotheses which may have affected the language of the writers, and which impair its force. This may be imagined; but no such imagination can have place with regard to the acts which Christ himself performed, and the authority which he assumed. These *imply* a proof which cannot be evaded. But this proof is found at once in the facts, which none who accepts the revelation made by him doubts or denies, namely in the facts that he worked miracles, that he forgave sins, and that he is the author, and was believed by his disciples to be the author, of eternal salvation to all who believe in him. All these are acts or attributes of

divine power, and of nothing less.^b Every being, real or imaginary, is a God to all who believe that he possesses personally, or of his own right, any such powers as these, or who place in him personally a religious dependence. And the only objection made to this statement is that Christ possessed or exercised these powers in the Father's right, or in the right of a superior, and not in his own. It is said that to identify the manifestation of God IN Christ, with the accounting of Christ as actual God, is confusing and erroneous; or that the expression God IN Christ means one thing, and the expression that Christ IS God means another thing.

To this objection I answer that both these expressions mean the same thing: or that, under the conditions in which Christ appeared, and in which the authors of this objection agree with us that he appeared, he was not, and could not be, less than God to all who believed in him.

As to what these conditions were, there are two opinions. The first of these opinions is that the Jews expected that he would be a divine person, which must, I suppose, of course, mean that he would be divine and human at once, which is what we believe him to be; and that his disciples received him as such. The other opinion is that they expected him to be a mere man. Now, if the first of these two opinions be the true opinion, the case is clear. A divine person, expected as such, and received as such by the authorities to which we defer, is very clearly divine. I will go here, however, on the other opinion, which also is, I think, the true opinion, and vouched by much the best criticism which we have of

^b Thus Chrysostom: πανταχού δὲ ὁρώμεν τούτο αὐτὸν ποιοῦντα, καὶ οὐκ οὕτω διὰ ῥημάτων ὡς διὰ πραγμάτων ἐπιδεικνύμενον τὴν ἰσότητά. Homil. in Paralyt.

the case.^c I moreover think that the whole tone of the disciples in their conversations with their blessed Master, while walking up and down with them in Galilee, and afterwards in Jerusalem, is inconsistent with the belief that they were yet prepared, even if they received him as the Messiah, to acknowledge him as being also that actual God, which we believe he was. *Their* Jewish education, *his* being poor, and weak, despised, and rejected, and bearing in his appearance nothing but humanity, may naturally have precluded them from yet receiving him for what he was.

But, however, this may be, I go here, on this opinion, namely, on the opinion that our blessed Saviour was not in the first instance expected or received as personally divine, even by his own disciples. If you take the other opinion, it is on the very side on which I am arguing. But then, on the other hand, it is not much to the purpose in the case before us which we take. If Christ were God, it does not much signify that even his disciples did not acknowledge him as God, except on such occasions as that in which Thomas broke out in the rapture of his devotional address to him after the resurrection. He may have been, and was, a real God to them nevertheless; as indeed it is, I think, evident that he declared himself to be, in claiming the title of Son of God, and unity with the Father, although his disciples understood not this saying at the time.^d In the same manner in

^c Wilson, in his *Illustration*, page 3, quotes Bull as on the other side. But Bull is hardly on the other side, although he refers to Mornay as proving "neque hoc prorsus ignorasse perspicaciores nonnullos ex Hebræorum magistris." See the *Judicium Eccl. Cathol.* 1, section 13. Mornay himself makes out but a poor case.

^d "Suo jure Deus omnipotens, quia Sermo Dei omnipotentis." Tertullian *adv. Prax.* c. 17, as quoted by Bull: *Def. Fid. Nic. Sect. 11 Ch. vii. § 4.* "Quia non minori se tradidit omnia filio creator, quæ per eum condidit, per sermonem scilicet suum." *Id. adv. Marcionem* IV. 25, *Ibid* q. v. and see Note B. at the end of these letters.

which he was also the true Messiah, to many who may have thought him only a prophet; or in which the Virgin Mary, as I suppose all Protestants hold, and rightly hold, is accounted of as a real goddess, by many of the more ignorant Roman Catholics, who yet do not call her by that name. Every being possessed, or supposed to be possessed personally of divine power is a God to all who believe in him. Also, all superhuman power, so far as that power is supposed to be in any degree personal, or not supposed to be strictly ministerial, or exercised in strict delegation from a higher original, is not and cannot be, less than divine power; cannot but absorb a religious hope and dependence which belongs of right only to the Supreme, and which I believe it to be among the first ends of all true revelation to centre only in him. If we once get above the measure which our knowledge of the extent of human power affords, we have no limit beyond. A power which could restore a crushed insect to life and activity may, for aught we know to the contrary, be equal to link both heaven and earth in a golden chain to the far off Empyrean.* And so also all writers on Natural Theology teach with one accord that the lesser or lower works of the one almighty hand exhibit proofs of Deity not less clear than the greater works, as they are called. If it be thought to offer any difficulty to the admission of this statement that it may admit even living men to the rank of divine, I allow that it does so. Yet it is not on this account the less clear that that being, be he who he may, can never be less than God, by whatever name we may call him, whether God or angel, or mediator, or saint, on whom *personally* we fasten any religious dependence, or on whom *personally* (for all depends on that) we suppose our sal-

* Paradise Lost, II. 1005.

vation any way to depend. If Tiresias was ever supposed not only to predict, but also to influence the future, he was as much a god as Apollo to all who consulted him under that belief. Scylla was no great deity, and yet was immortal, and not to be contended with.^f And on the same principle I must of course allow, or even contend, that Moses also may have been accounted of as a real God by Pharaoh, and Elijah by Ahab. If this statement be not sufficiently definite, I add that I mean by personal power, as distinguished from that which is ministerial, all power which is understood to be anything more than declaratory, or in respect of which anything more of authority is supposed to be left to the immediate agent or minister whom we address, or by whom we are addressed, than could reasonably be attributed to those written tables of law and of promise, which were received at Sinai as from the hands of God.

This principle, therefore, being thus laid down, the only possible way to prevent any real or supposed superhuman power from being regarded as divine, is, as I have already said, to believe that the power is not only derived from, but is also always exercised in strict delegation from, a higher authority. If there be any *discretion* left to God's agent, God's agent is a God, just as much as a house steward, who has the power to hire and discharge the inferior domestics, is efficiently the master of those domestics. And I believe it to have been the wisdom of both the Patriarchal and the Jewish religions, as also we know it to have been that of the commission vested by our Saviour in his apostles, always to teach and reiterate the lesson, that all religious power whatever was to be exercised in the name of either the Lord of Hosts, or of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

^f *Odys.* M. 118—120.

This, I believe, *they* always did. I do not say that they always succeeded in making this teaching effective. Human superstition, ignorance and folly, will often be too strong for the most careful guards. The almost universal commingling in all human affairs of that power which I have here called personal or discretionary, with power which is only declaratory, will often give a practical importance or influence to the direct or visible agent, which is not rightfully his own, or which it may be even confessed at the same time that his commission does not include. But this sort of friction in the application of the principle, disturbs not its truth. I believe the care of the apostles to have been systematic and universal to reject all right not strictly and solely ministerial in the execution or administration of the office confided to them. In the same manner in which every pure teacher of Christianity in our own times is always careful to refer away from himself to the one and only forgiver of our sins, every notion of authority which the absolving formularies of our Church may at any time be thought by the ignorant and superstitious to vest in the priest himself.

Did Christ then do this? Did not he on the contrary assume a personal authority which we do not assume? And did not his disciples, although more or less prevented by their Jewish education from acknowledging in him that God whom they knew to be but one, yet look on him as having in himself personally (whether derived or underived does not here matter) a superhuman power? I mean that superhuman power, which he proved by his miracles, that power of binding and loosing which his disciples exercised not in God's name, but in his; or that mediatorial influence with the Father which is in itself a power not less than divine. When his mother expressed to him her desire that he should work a miracle

at Cana, she did not mean that he should prefer the request to God. When he rebuked the sea, it is not meant that he prayed to his Father to still the rage of the waves. When Martha exclaimed: If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died: the absence of his own personal power or authority was what she regretted. To the same purport also his own reiterated declarations. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." "I have power of my own self to lay down my life, and take it again." "If ye ask anything in my name," and so forth. If this power had not been his own, I am persuaded that he would not at any time have been less earnest than his apostles were, to disavow it; as when they exclaimed to the men of Lycaonia: "we also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God."

Also in this case of our Saviour, if *his* possession of this divine power could be otherwise doubted, we possess, and this even by the confession of those who in words deny his divinity, a most emphatic and peculiar evidence of it of a most remarkable kind. You will have observed in Mr. Norton's book, that he concedes, and indeed he can hardly help it, the existence of a miraculous intercourse or communication between Christ and his apostles, after the period of the ascent into heaven.^s But this admission admits the very strongest part of our whole case. A religious teacher, while on earth, might be regarded only as a Socrates. Even if a worker of miracles, he *might* so couple them, as we suppose the prophets and apostles to have coupled theirs, or the teaching vouched by them, with declarations of their being of immediate commission from a higher power, as to retain for himself the character of mere humanity. And accordingly the Unitarians, though

^s Statement 161—163

I think erroneously, as I shall come to show in my next letter, interpret to this effect some of the declarations made by Christ himself while on earth. But a religious teacher removed from earth, and still appearing, or supposed to appear, in vision or miracle to his apostles or followers, could not possibly appear to them as possessed of anything less than of both a strictly personal, and a divine authority. We are not told, and we cannot imagine, that the *ascended* Christ did make any disclaimer of that authority, and therefore cannot think him less than divine.

If therefore, the personal assumption and exercise of divine power be, as is thus clearly the case, the proof of divinity, it follows that in speaking of its assumption and exercise by Christ, our meaning must be one and the same, whether we speak of it as exercised by God IN Christ, or by Christ AS God. It has been ably argued that this was also the actual interpretation put by the Jews on the equivalent claim which he set up for himself during his abode on earth: namely on his claim to be the Son of God, or to be one with the Father.^h All these sayings which moreover apparently staggered for a time his own disciples, and offended the multitude, were regarded, or at least, were imputed to him by his enemies as blasphemy. But neither would his disciples have been staggered, nor the multitude offended, nor would, or could, it is said, the charge of blasphemy have been grounded on them, if they had not claimed something more than that inspiration by which it was universally acknowledged that God had spoken to the prophets which were before. I will not make myself responsible for this argument. I do think, indeed, as you know, that these declarations, rationally interpreted, amount to nothing less than this argument

^h See Wilson's Illustration, p. 26 ; but compare Neander's Life of Christ. English Translation, p. 327.

states them at, or to a no less certain affirmation of coequal divinity with the Father, than any which are to be found in our own formularies. I believe that it was our Saviour's intention that *we* should draw from them this conclusion. But still a degree of obscurity appears to me to hang over the meaning which these declarations bore, and which he meant them to bear, in the minds of the disciples, and of the other Jews, to whom he addressed them. We know certainly that he did not tell, or mean to tell, of himself plainly or universally at first, everything which he meant to be inferred afterwards. And this point of his divinity is exactly the point on which he would be most chary of giving an offence, or exciting a sensation, which he wished not, during the period of his earthly ministry, to give or excite.¹ But then again, the exact interpretation or sense of these declarations is not *here* the point in question. If he, the meek Jesus, assumed, in whatever sense, the titles of having God in him, and being one with God, and was so understood as making himself in any sense equal with God, he was not then, and cannot be now, less than God to all who believe in him.

The only objection, as I apprehend, which can be made to what I have here said, is that a *God* is properly a being independent, and underived : and men of learning have not been wanting, who have contended for the monotheism of even the Heathen Poets, those great abettors of Polytheism, because they either allowed, or would have allowed, a dependency of all their subordinate Gods, and of their Jupiter himself, on some goddess *μῦσα* in the back ground. The fact may be allowed : but then it does not tell in the least against what I have said. For though it is very easy to imagine a dependent God, or a God whose power may not extend (say) to the creative, or a God on

¹ See note B, at the end of these Letters.

whom no absolute reliance can be placed, or a God who shall be a God of the hills, and not of the valleys, yet the God who is thus imagined is still, though in this place of inferiority, an imagined God. Every such imagination is, or may be, worshipped with a worship which, however faint, is nothing else than idolatry, and absorbs, though it may be but a small part, yet at least a part of that devotion which we owe only to the underived Father of all, to him who is one with Christ. The very end of the doctrine of the unity, or of Christ being one with God, is to put down all derivation of superhuman authority on any other being whatever. If there be but one God, there is none else. If there be any other superhuman authority over us, this is equivalent to there being more than one.^k

Always, my dear Sir, yours truly,

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^k See on this subject Waterland on Mediatorial Worship, works, iii. 343. seqq. "The Scripture never makes any difference between directing and terminating worship," p. 345, B. "To pay religious worship to anything is in Scripture style making a God of it," p. 346. The late amiable Dr. Channing speaks as follows of the prevalent sentiment of the Unitarians of the United States respecting the person of Christ. "We agreed in our late conference that a majority of our brethren believe that Jesus Christ is more than man, that he existed before the world, that he literally came from heaven to save our race, that he sustains other offices than those of a teacher and witness to the truth, and that he still acts for our benefit, and is our intercessor with the Father. This we agreed to be the prevalent sentiment of our brethren." Memoir of Dr. Channing, vol. i. p. 388. But if Christ be this, he is God. No distinction between the Divine power and attributes, and the power and attributes of such a being as this, can possibly be drawn. It is not a little remarkable that the title of Unitarianism should be stretched to comprehend both this opinion concerning our Saviour's person, and that of his having been merely a man. Still more so, that it should be so stretched by a most candid writer, who objects (note p. 410) to the laxity with which the title of *Trinitarian* is sometimes assumed or applied.

LETTER III.

On the same subject, or of Christ as discriminated from every other human being whatever.

MY DEAR SIR,

Your answer to my last letter admits, and indeed, as you say, it is impossible not to admit, the great fact of that personalisation of God in Christ, of which I have spoken. But then you ask me to explain particularly how our principle of the universal agency and operation of the Divine mind^a can be consistent with our personalising him as we do in Christ *alone*. How, on this principle, do we, or can we, discriminate Christ from all other men; I might say all other beings, but the point at issue is from all other men. If all virtue, all manifestation of Godhead, be but the effluxes of that one Divine mind which is in all things good, how differed it as it spake in Christ from its speakings in other great and good men of either the ancient world or the present? Was not God on this principle no less truly in the prophets of the Old Testament; or in the Apostles; is he not still not less truly in Christ's best servants than in Christ himself?

^a Compare pp. 19, 20.

To this question thus put I answer in the first place, that I do not dare to deny it. I look on every individual who, on the principle of religion, devotes himself to any holy cause, prosecutes any useful study, or object of charity, or submits unrepiningly to affliction, as possessing the one spirit of all goodness, and even as gifted, so far as it is not incommunicable, with the divine nature, or with that of God in Christ. I look upon every great example as being in some sense a divine example, or as of the inspiration of that Almighty one, who alone confers the moral wisdom or understanding, which he approves. Those great names spread over all ages, in which every man not wilfully blind may see the patterns, and the practicability, of preferring duty to pleasure, truth to falsehood, the future to the present, friendship and love, and the happiness of mankind to self, are all of them, as I think, manifestations of that one and the same divine original, from whom alone everything which is truly good flows, or can flow. Neither yet do I think that without these continuous and perpetually and visibly operating influences of the Divine Spirit, the mere doctrine that there is such a Spirit, or even the pattern of the Saviour himself, could have availed us much. Without seeing the sheaves brought home from the harvest field, or stored in his barn, the husbandman would make but little use of those books of agriculture which are locked up in his closet, or ranged on his shelf. God, therefore, we may be well assured, is not unwise, nor yet displays himself otherwise than in the highest of his works, so far as he vouchsafes to direct and fructify by his own ever present influence all those thoughts and aspirations of the good man's mind, especially of every Christian mind, on which the success of even his own divine benevolence is thus suspended. These, moreover, as they may be somewhat

rhetorically called the triumphs, so are also quite strictly the proofs or effects, of that operation of his spirit, without which they would not and could not, on the supposition of the existence of that universally operating divine mind itself, even exist.

But still, though thus the Divine mind is seen and acknowledged in all things good, and though it is our very doctrine of the Holy Spirit that so it is, we do not see the less clearly that the discrimination of GOD IN CHRIST from God in every other effluence of his Spirit is marked and decisive. I pointed out to you in my last letter, while speaking of the personal authority which the Saviour assumed, and which proves him to be GOD, some few of the many marked passages of his history in which we see it. Look back at those passages. If no other such acts are recorded, no other such words spoken of or by any other good man, this makes the case peculiar at once, or to stand by itself. But to go on again to a few more quotations to the same effect. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee: Give me to drink." "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him." "But I say unto you that in this place is one greater than the temple." "For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath Day." "My yoke is easy, and my burden light." "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets." So also in his *address* to the sick of the palsy. "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again." And in the same evidently most unaffected manner, from the very beginning to the end of all the Gospels. Moreover if the writers of the Gospels had not known or believed, that in recording these words they were recording the verba ipsissima of Christ himself, I

think that they could not have used them. And you already know that I think it nothing less than clear that this language is the language of God, of A God at the very least.

But this is more than I am concerned to take it at in this place. Say for a moment that it could be the language of man, or of man only. Yet assuredly no other man, or no other man of perfect human meekness and lowliness, no divine, no apostle, ever spake in this way of himself.^b The case would certainly be a single case, even if it were not divine.

Neither, yet, does the singularity of it end here. Christ only is the sinless one ; HE only is the redeemer. HE has spoken far more emphatically in miracle, especially in the miracle of the resurrection ; and, as I am fully persuaded, although for obvious reasons I do not here quote it, in that of the incarnation also ; than any other being, who can be either named or imagined, on whom any portion of the same Divine Spirit has been ever bestowed. By him emphatically life and immortality were brought to light : and to him alone has been confided the noble office, an office to which in moral dignity no other is comparable, of being made a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

Also, and lastly, if the Divinity did not rest on Christ in some peculiar and practically discriminated sense, or degree, why in Him alone, and from the commencement to the close of His ministry, is the very same, unchanged, all perfect, and consequently unimproved, and unimprovable, wisdom always conspicuous ? All other Divine men, if any other man can be entitled divine, have been taught by experience, have grown wiser by degrees. That this was true of the disciples is one of the plainest features of the Gospel history : that it was true of the apostles

^b See Neander's *Life of Christ*, p. 62.

after Christ's death is plain from their controversies, and from the conversion of the most eminent of them. And that it has been true in every subsequent age, and especially of the ablest men and the best, all feel and acknowledge. But Christ, if divine at all, appears from the history to have been alike divine from the beginning. No change of the plan of salvation designed in his mind can, as I think, although the contrary has been sometimes rashly insinuated, be imputed to him. From his Baptism in Jordan to his ascent from the Mount of Olives, the same one plain lesson, though varied in its application according to the circumstances in which he was placed, and the susceptibilities of his hearers, seems, as far as we can see, and we see enough to judge, to have been always present with him.^c There is not any discrimination, as it appears to me, of any one human being from another, which to a human intelligence, can be stronger than this.

Christ, therefore, as he is thus discriminated from all other men, and as he is also both perfect and illimitable, stands out clearly as a personalization of God, (of the God all whose attributes, it is to be recollected, we must necessarily look for in man,) with which no other can be brought into comparison. As that personalization of God, therefore, we account of him that he is God, and therefore the supreme God, for there is no other.

It does not interrupt this conclusion that he may be also man,^d and may, as man, possess, together with his

^c Compare Tholuck on Hebrews, vol. i. p. 83 seqq. in the Biblical Cabinet : and Neander's Life of Christ, pp. 62, 63.

^d Videmus duplicem statum, non confusum, sed conjunctum in una persona, Deum et hominem Jesum. Et adeo salva est utriusque proprietas substantiæ, ut et spiritus res suas egerit in illo, id est virtutes et opera et signa, et caro passiones suas functa sit, esuriens sub diabolo, sitiens sub Samaritide, flens Lazarum, anxia usque ad mortem, denique et mortua est. Quod si tertium quid esset ex utroque confusum ut electrum, non tam distincta documenta parerent utriusque substantiæ. Sed quia substantiæ

other human faculties and graces, a derived goodness or inspiration. For we do not worship him as he is man. In this acknowledged principle that he is man also, we moreover come, as I think, to the solution of the only real difficulty which the Unitarians have to urge against his divinity. Although, as has been seen, he on some occasions claims for himself a power not less than divine, he yet on other occasions appears to disclaim any such power. "The son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do." "For I have not spoken of myself. . . . Whatsoever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak." "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." Now there are two ways in which all these passages, and others equivalent to them, may be understood. They may in the first place be understood as if our Saviour intends to affirm that his whole office and character is not less strictly and clearly ministerial, than that of a servant who executes a master's bidding under the master's eye. If we take these passages in this sense, the meaning of all those texts which I before quoted to you, and of every other passage in which he seems to assume a higher dignity, must be reduced to this. That is the one alternative. The other alternative is to interpret these passages by the others, those which I produced before : the letter by what seems to me the spirit : that is, to interpret these apparent disclaimers as meant to affirm, not that he was not God, but that although man,

ambæ in statu suo quæque distincte agebant, ideo illis et operæ et exitus sui occurrerunt. Disce igitur cum Nicodemo : Quia quod in carne natum est caro est, et quod de spiritu, spiritus est. Neque caro spiritus fit, neque spiritus caro. In uno plane esse possunt. Tertullian adv. Praxeum, xxvii. Thus much we may, I suppose, say and believe on this subject, and without refining so far as to become either Nestorians, or Eutychians, or Monothelites. "But as we, by receiving the spirit, do not lose our own proper substance, so the Lord when made man for us, and bearing a body, was no less God : for he was not lessened by the envelopment of the body, but rather deified it, and rendered it immortal." Athanasius, in the Library of the Fathers, viii. 23.

the Father was in him. This also appears to me to be the clear and the natural sense of the words : while, on the other hand, the reduction of all the other passages, and, what is more, of the character of personal authority with which he invested his whole teaching, to this meaning, is most inadmissible.

It would, of course, be easy to enter into the explication of all these passages in detail. But detail is not what you ask from me in these letters.* I will therefore conclude for the present with merely adding to what I have already said, that the strength, if it have any strength, of the whole argument against our Saviour's divinity is based on nothing else than these last texts which I have here produced, and of those few other texts in which he thus, to the hasty eye, seems, as I have said, to disclaim it. If, in opposition to what I have here said, it can be fairly made out that these texts are to be understood as absolute disclaimers of his possessing anything more than a mere ministerial authority, we must all come round of necessity to the belief that he was merely man. If not, all who affirm that he was merely man must come round to us. The whole controversy, if it must always remain a controversy, may easily be made to hinge on this question alone. I need not give you again my own, which is also, as you know, the common version of it.

Always, yours truly,

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* See both on this particular point, and on the whole doctrine of the Trinity, the three last of Mr. Conybeare's Theological Lectures, in which the argument appears to me to be stated with singular judgment and skill. In saying this, however, I ought not to forbear adding that I think it an error of language to speak of the three persons of the Trinity as of distinct agents, or as possessing distinct individualities (pp. 464, and 466, Second Edition). If we were to add to the Athanasian creed the following clause, "The Father is an agent, the Son an agent, and the Holy Ghost an agent, and yet there are not three agents, but one agent;" Mr. Conybeare certainly would not object to this definition. See Bull's Def. Fid. Nic. II. vii. 5.

LETTER IV.

Of the moral and religious uses of this doctrine of the personalisation of God in Christ, or of Christ's divinity.

MY DEAR SIR,

I may now say, I think, that our case is complete. If the records of the Evangelical history be accurate records, the fact is clear, that we have God himself before us in Christ, the immediate source of our dependence, our object of worship, the personal manifestation of the Almighty friend and Father of us all. I do not see how the fulness of this proof can possibly be evaded, unless by arguing that either the disciples did not place on Christ that personal reliance which ought to be placed in God, and only in God ; or that Christ habitually corrected their error if they did, and did not assume any personal authority, surpassing that of a mere teacher of a pure doctrine, and of that greatest of all merely human examples of moral perfection, which even the unbeliever confesses him to have been. But no argument, as I think I proved to you sufficiently in my last letter, can be, though it has been tried, more hopeless than this.

If then Christ be God, it plainly follows that we ought to worship him as God. Unless we learn to see God him-

self in what God himself has done for us, we necessarily either omit to see as we should desire to see, what that is ; or else we fasten on a mediator not God a confidence or a dependence which ought to be God's, and only God's ; and this possibly also at the frightful moral expense of denying or disregarding in the Supreme Father of all, that goodness which we ascribe to his servant or minister. This point, I need not, I think, attempt farther to prove. But I may yet proceed, though not to prove, yet to unfold it somewhat particularly. For God in his goodness allows us, inscrutable as he is, not only to demonstrate the truth, but also to trace out the wisdom, of everything which he teaches us, or which he enables us to learn and know, of either what he is, or what he does.

Why then, it is asked, or for what moral object and end, are we instructed to personalize God in Christ ? I assume, as you have seen, and as already proved, that we are in fact instructed to do so ; and I shall also shew more at length in a future letter,* that I do not account of either this doctrine or that of the Holy Spirit as merely human or artificial expositions of a great general truth, but as having a foundation of reality in the Divine mind itself, and in the revelations made to us of it.

To this question, therefore, so asked, I answer by another. Why do we personalize God at all ? The reply is easy, and a reply which I suppose will be universally made to the same question by every religionist, that it is nothing less than necessary to the ends of religion so to do. I allow that there is not any notion which takes a deeper hold of the thoughtful mind, than that of a Deity removed, as God in his essence necessarily is,

* Letter VII.

beyond the grasp of every human or finite understanding. The noble, though in itself indefinite, philosophy of the existence of an immortal spirit, living in, directing, and pervading the whole of creation, is a philosophy inseparable from every higher and worthier conception of that universal frame, of which we are a part. It is that very conception, if we may so speak, of the Infinite, with which the Christian, when he finds it stated, nearly as I have here stated it, by the great writers of heathenism, finds himself most disposed to sympathise and unite. But then it is a conception too vague to be properly religious, and which, if we go no farther, converts the Deity into a mere animated nature, and strips him of his moral qualities, and of design.^b To make this conception religious, it is necessary to go at least one step farther than we have yet gone. This principle is not only infinite and immortal, but is also an AGENT. He exists to us as GOD. As such we PERSONALIZE him. And we personalize him also in his several agencies or attributes. We not only know of him from the work of creation that he exists, as the watchmaker is known by the mechanism of his watch : but we know of him also that he is the wise, the just, the good, and the true : and so in respect of every other attribute which he can be proved to possess. Moreover, as I have said, we not only do this ; that is, we not only do accustom ourselves to personalize God in these attributes, but it is also highly important and even necessary to accomplish the ends of religion, that we should do it. We cannot, such are our faculties, bring home the sense of what this divine mind is, or rather of our relation to it, unless we do thus learn to look at it, in those particular operations in which it is in our power to observe, or

^b See on this point what will be said in Letter VIII.

detect, its method of working.^c Thus in the investigation of Nature, it is not only necessary for us to trace out, as far as we can, that means are employed which conduce to an end, but also that both the means and the end are benignant. And this one point is often enough for us at one time. We shall find ourselves bewildered in much too extensive a field of speculation, or oppressed with mere astonishment, and ignorant wonder, if we do not sometimes confine ourselves to that point alone. And accordingly I suppose that a separate chapter on the goodness of God is inserted in every treatise on Natural Theology which was ever written. The writer of every such chapter shews that the ripening of the corn is intended to prepare it for the sustentation of man : that the beauty of colours is meant to delight the eye ; that eternal happiness is the designated end of God's moral creation. But this is personalizing God as good. And if we did not thus personalize him we could not appreciate even as we do, *pro more et modulo nostro*, either the nature of his goodness, or its extent.

In the same manner we personalize also the other attributes. And so also the Scripture personalizes them all. It personalizes God in a thousand places, as he is merciful, as he is loving, as he is righteous : or indeed I might say, if it were worth while, as he is mercy, love, or righteousness. But inasmuch as the personalization thus instituted denotes only attribute or character, there

^c The reasons of our doing this, says Mosheim, are as follows :—I. *Auctoritas SS. quæ loquitur separatim de misericordia Dei, de æternitate, &c.* II. *Altera causa est intellectus nostri imbecillitas, ille enim non tanta gaudet perspicuitate et tanto lumine, ut ens simplicissimum uno mentis actu comprehendere, sibi que representare queat.* Nobis primum alias naturas aliaque nobis entia representemus necesse est, et deinde ad Deum conceptus quos formavimus nobis, applicamus. *El. Theolog. Dogm. i. 234.* Mr. Norton carries this principle on to the necessary personification of the *λόγος*. *Statement, pp. 231—234.* See Note C at the end of these Letters.

is absolutely no difference between saying that we personalize the divine attribute itself, and saying that we personalize God IN that attribute or character. And so, moreover, though with modifications not here to the purpose (and in this our common Scripture would go along with us also) we may, if we will, personalize this same our God of mercy as also a jealous God, or in his attribute of jealousy. This, if we do this, is evidently for the purpose of bringing before the human eye in the stronger relief those penalties which under the eternal law of the one all comprehensive but incomprehensible mind, are inflicted on sin. LAW alone, if without the conception of a lawgiver it may be allowed to exist, yet must at any rate lose ordinarily its effect on the mind, unless the lawgiver be at least supposed to exist also. Both LAW and LOVE require to be brought close to the eye, or to an undistracted vision, if we would render either as efficient as we would wish them to be. But if it be thus both our wisdom and our duty to personalize, as we thus always do, the present and particular operation of the one divine mind in all things, especially in all things good, we infer necessarily both the wisdom and the benefit of our being taught as we are to personalize it in Christ. If it be desirable to bring its operation perpetually and pointedly before our eyes in its greatest works, its work in Christ is the greatest of them all. And on the very same principle also we have no less to recognize the same mind as the present infuser of that spirit of grace, repentance and faith, in which we approach him. But this is to personalize him in these agencies. I must forbear to enter into the detail of the many, or I might say the inexhaustible, moral applications which this doctrine supplies. I add, however, as bearing more

particularly on the doctrinal view of our case, the two following propositions.

1st, that except as so personalized, we have not, and in its best and most expressive form cannot have, that clear and just conception of what God is to us, which Christianity is meant to give.

2dly, and correlatively, that, except as God shews himself to us, or personalizes himself in Christ, we miss that pattern or exemplification of the divine perfections which Christ, and Christ alone, is or can be to us, and in which we may trust.

With regard to the first of these two heads, it is plain that it is only by analogizing from man that we can see God at all. We may look at him, we do look at him, as indeed is plain from what was said before (pp. 13, 14) in different aspects. For instance, as Christians we look at him as Creator, Saviour, and Comforter. But still, in whatever aspect or aspects we look at him, the perfection of the human character is necessarily our guide in adjusting them all. But if thus the divine *must* for us be analogized from the human, it is wholly impossible for us to see it in any other way so well as in that human character in which is incorporated the full perfection of every human virtue and power. God, to our apprehension, is man, abstracting human weakness and imperfection. He cannot be understood to be anything else. And therefore man, abstracting only that same weakness and imperfection, is, to our apprehension, also God. Therefore, also, the manifestation in Christ is of that consummate importance to us which it is, in showing us GOD. Certainly we see not in *him*, that is in Christ, any moral imperfection whatever. Neither is he limitable by us in anything except his mortality. We have only to superadd the exemption from this universal lot of mankind, and we have then,

in him, God himself before us at once. We want not any further proof, we cannot have any further knowledge, of Divinity.—Hence it also follows, and this is another argument in addition to those which I alleged in my last letter for our Saviour's divinity, that it is wholly impossible to account of that character in which perfection is thus incorporated, as less than divine : and also that our worship of Christ, superadding or assuming his immortality, thus is, and can only be, the worship of God. If, moreover, people are not thus taught to look at the Divine in Christ, and therefore to worship him, or rather the one God in him, I imagine that it will be very hard to protect them from the alternative of either worshipping a saint, or worshipping nothing. The very errors, the very idolatries of our species, prove that this is the case. It was not for nothing that the heathen had Gods many, and Lords many. The disposition to invest the Divine power with even the less allowable human affections, and bodily form, and also to make for itself a number of divinities, is a disposition, easily led, no doubt, into error, but which has its root in nature itself. Therefore, we Christians take refuge from its error in Christ, in the perfection which purifies from it ; and which at once embodies an analogy which we cannot do without, and states and shews plainly and broadly that all the kindness, and goodness, and I may even say human tenderness, for which we are grateful to him, is the kindness and tenderness of the Divine Parent himself. The personalization, therefore, of God in Christ gives us, and gives, as aforesaid, in its best and most expressive form, that clear and just conception of what God is to us which Christianity was meant to give. This was my first head.

2. And then to this I add correlatively, that as Christ thus shews us GOD, so it is scarcely, if at all, a less benefit

to us, that God should show or personalize himself to us in CHRIST. Except by being thus taught to see God in him, or, which is the same thing, GOD personalized in him, I do not see that we could have been led really to conceive of the Saviour in that marked discrimination from all other wise and good men, whether heathen sages, or Jewish prophets, or his own Apostles and followers, in which he exists to us. And surely it is a great point gained, as we acknowledge one God, so also to acknowledge one mediator : one God who has shewn himself in a peculiar sense in one manifestation or form,—who gives us in him that one and only image of the Divine, which we should else have to seek, as the heathen philosophers sought, and often without finding, in abstract theory or contemplation.

Neither yet do I see how, unless by accounting of Christ as GOD, this discrimination of him from every other being, of which I spoke in my last letter, can possibly be kept up with sufficient distinctness for the common mind. The experience of those of the believers in his divine mission, who yet do not acknowledge him to be God personally, is, I apprehend, proof enough on this point. It is quite notorious, that their expression of their belief in the truth, the goodness, and even the perfection of the man Christ, does practically offend the ordinary feeling of the Christian mind, not only by denying to him the title of God, but also, and, I suppose, quite as much, by classing, or seeming to class him, with his precursors or followers. I do not think that this is always, or necessarily, so. I believe that there are Unitarians, I think that I could refer to Unitarian writers, who look at the manifestation of God in Christ, as being a no less peculiar manifestation of him than it is considered to be by the most determined Trinitarian. But that the common

case is as I have represented it to be, will scarcely be questioned. And if so, this is evidently another reason why the giving him that only title which sets him, and which alone can set him, plainly and at once above all other mortals, how good or great soever,—above every other name which can be named either in earth or in heaven,—is, (if the doctrine of the Divine unity be, or can be, as I think I shall show you in a future letter that it may be or is at the same time, sufficiently guarded,) most useful and salutary to us.—How much the beginning of the Epistle to the Hebrews comes in aid of this argument : how appositely the title of the Divine Logos is connected with the man thus distinguished above his fellows, you, my dear Sir, will, I am sure, readily see.—Thus useful, I repeat, no less than true, is that ascription which we make to Christ of the title of God, of the one God, the supreme. I proved in my last letter that both his own declarations concerning himself, and the powers which he exercised, proclaim him clearly so to be. And I think that I have now shown no less clearly that we cannot deny him to be what thus he is, without exposing ourselves to the imminent danger, and in many cases to the certainty, of the evaporation of that spirit, in which it is both our duty and our blessing to pour forth at once our thankfulness and our prayers to the Father and to Him.

Always, my dear Sir, yours, truly,

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LETTER V.

Of the history and origin of the doctrine of Christ's divinity, and of the coincidence of both the doctrine and language of Christ with our own.

MY DEAR SIR,

I have sufficiently proved, as I think, both from our blessed Saviour's own assumptions as recorded by the evangelists, and from the facts of his history, that he was nothing less than God, and therefore the only God. But still the language in which this doctrine has come down to us is a point highly deserving of attention, and especially the language concerning it, which we find in the writers of the new Testament, who are almost our only trustworthy authorities.

In thus referring at once to the New Testament, you must not suppose me to detract from the subsidiary evidence to the same effect which the writings of the age or ages immediately subsequent to the Apostolical, also afford. No one fact, I think, can be better established than that Christ was generally if not universally accounted of by the Christians of that period as, at least in some way, divine. But if he were accounted divine in any sense, I have already shewn sufficiently that there is but one sense in which he can be understood to be divine, and that in that sense he is GOD.

It is, doubtless, highly satisfactory to possess this suffrage to the truth of our own doctrine, which we thus derive from its very early reception in the Church. And yet still the value of this suffrage fades almost altogether away, when compared with that which we collect from the authentic expositors.

What, then, I now ask, is the language on this subject of the evangelists and apostles ; or rather what is the language of St. John, to whom it is notorious that we have in this case chiefly to refer ? To this question I answer that *our* doctrine, or what *we* say, is, that the Son is God, and that Christ is the Son : and that what St. John says is, that the word is God. That the word and the Son, as we use the term Son, are altogether identical, I suppose that no one doubts ; for although amongst the hair-splittings, or rather attempts at hair-splitting, of some of the Fathers, we find occasional attempts to sever the meaning of these words, we may pass that by. That any closer correspondence, or clearer synonymy, than that which here exists between the apostle's language and our own, can anywhere be found, it must be hard to imagine. Here then the case may rest. We are speaking merely of language, and of nothing else. We do not want any farther justification of our own language, or any other authority.

In order to understand, however, the better this language of the apostle, and also because the thorough understanding of his language on this subject will, I think, throw more light, than can be derived from any other quarter, on the whole doctrine which I am making it my business to state, I will go back to the elements of it. These must be, of course, looked for in the philosophies of his time ; and it is moreover certain that these philosophies, whatever they were, must have been interpreted by him, a Jew, in subjection to, or in consistency with, those

well argued by his ablest interpreter, he was himself what is now called a Sabellian. "Philo," says Mosheim, "when he added to the God who is, two powers, the creative and the governing, was speaking merely according to the sense of the vulgar, and in reality he acknowledged no distinction, and no divine person in God."^c Wherefore he is the better evidence of what is here called the vulgar belief. Mr. Norton has, I think, stated the whole argument from Philo well and convincingly, and is also confirmed in what he says by the writings of almost all the earlier fathers, and of Eusebius, and the preceding writers to whom Eusebius refers. Into the more detailed learning on this subject I, of course, do not pretend to enter. I will only add, therefore, that I believe there is no controversy as to what I have here said of it : that you will find a chapter which enters into it fully, though a chapter which has not been safe from criticism, in Michaelis's Introduction : that it is well stated in a long note by M. Guizot in Mr. Milman's very valuable edition of Gibbon, and that the late very intelligent Mr. Veysie, in his *Preservative against Unitarianism*, states the case, though with, I suppose, rather too definite a reference to the Gnostics, in nearly the same way.^d Gnosticism or not, there is not a doubt, I believe, nor does any one raise any, that these were opinions, or philosophies, which were current at the time when St. John's Gospel was written, and which are referred to in several parts of it, and in his preface especially. It is altogether evident, and I might say grammatically evident, that the apostle's meaning in this passage is to state, as with these opinions spread out before him, the doctrine of the divine attributes or qualities, or agencies, and of their exhibition in Christ. He is

^c Mosheim's note on Cudworth, iv. 36, Note 7.

^d P. 47 seqq.

not to be understood as meaning to teach anything of science, or elementary religious education, on this subject to the uninstructed or ignorant, or as properly *originating* any doctrine either of God, or of Christ ; but rather as stating the doctrine of God in Christ, or of Christ and God, as affected by, or as it might be held in connection with, the philosophical theories of his time ; or it may be said that his main and direct end is to repel the error of imagining that either light, or life, or wisdom, or truth, or indeed, he might have added, any other either moral or intellectual principle, is anyway independent of, or is not, in some sense, but a manifestation of, the perpetual presence and providence of that one God, on whom all depend. But that this is the very doctrine of the divine mind, as brought into contact with creation, with man, and, in the immediate view of the apostle, with the Jewish nation especially, is no less evident.

Neither yet *could* St. John, in his position and circumstances, or from what a German would call his standing point, teach otherwise. He, a Jew, could not mean to teach any doctrine inconsistent with the Divine unity : he could not mean to teach formally or directly the doctrine of that unity to Jews, who always acknowledged it. Neither yet could he mean to teach the doctrine of the divine personality, to a people the very first element of whose religion was to recognise the agency of the one Jehovah in the whole history of their race. Nothing, therefore, as I think, can be plainer than that his direct object was, and could only be, to teach of the attributes, that if personified, as they were and must be, and by a process which your friend Mr. Norton has shewn to be, under the circumstances, both easy and unavoidable,* and especially to teach of the attribute, or agency, or doctrine,

* Statement 231, 234 ; and see Note D at the end of these Letters.

of the Divine word, that all these attributes are to be understood as personalizations of the one God, than whom there is no other.

From this doctrine, which I have thus stated, arose, I think, quite plainly that of the Trinity. Into what the doctrine of the Trinity is, or may be, or may not be, or understood to be, more than this statement contains, I do not now inquire.^f That this interpretation of the language of St. John, which is my only present point, is the correct interpretation of it, I believe that all opinions concur.^g But that it concurs entirely with our own addressing ourselves to Christ as the word, or the Son, or as God, I have already shewn.

I might here, then, end this letter. But inasmuch as I have begun the history of the doctrine, I will add a few words more on its subsequent progress. We have found its origin, I think, quite plainly in that sort of personification of the divine virtues, or qualities, or attributes, which was a part of the philosophy of the apostolical age. What followed was, I think, that many of the early Christians carried on these personifications, just as Mr. Norton has stated, into an actual severance from the supreme God, and in fact made them, though still in an inferior sense, so many Gods, Gods of a sort of second order or degree. I doubt not also but that they may have often thought themselves sanctioned by St. John's authority in so doing, or thought that they derived this doctrine from him. And this error was nothing less than the error of a Polytheism, a sort of Polytheism which might of course be carried to any length. Life, and light, and power, and justice, are not less easily personified than redemption or grace. This same process, moreover, which seems to

^f See on this subject Letter vii.

^g Certainly Mr. Norton concurs entirely.

have been consummated by the Valentinians, settled at last into the error of the Arians, and often into a severance of the Holy Spirit from the Supreme. Both the error is admitted, and this its process recognised by all Trinitarians, and, as I suppose, by all modern Unitarians. But still notwithstanding all this admission of error, I imagine that the mass of real intelligence on this subject, in all the Christian sects, must have been in substance sound. All were protected both by the universal acknowledgment of the unity, and by the moral insight into the Holy attributes of the one Divinity which Scripture had given them. Doubtless there were some who then, as now, threw this shield away, or who were not covered by it. Yet not the less, the recognised worship whether of Father, Son, or Holy Ghost, was that of a consentient Divinity, who, if under all these titles, or aspects alike holy, alike infinite, alike compassionate for human infirmity, and alike provident for our good, *can* only be ONE.^h

I am, my dear Sir, yours always,

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^h See Note G at the end of these Letters.

LETTER VI.

Of the objection that the worship of Christ is inconsistent with the doctrine of the divine unity, and that the doctrine of the divinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, is a Tritheistical doctrine. Also, of the objections to the use of the words Trinity, substance, and person.

MY DEAR SIR,

You appear to apprehend that notwithstanding the argument which you allow me to have made out for the worship of Christ, and the belief in his divinity, it cannot be thus easily reconciled, as you see that I have assumed it to be, with the doctrine of God's unity, and that it must therefore fail. You observe that certainly the Father is not Christ, nor Christ the Father: that the Father certainly is God; and you therefore ask how it can be possible that if Christ be God also, we have not two Gods at the least: or, if we add to this doctrine that the Holy Ghost is also God, and yet distinct from both the Father and the Son, how we can avoid being Tritheists.

1. To this question I answer in the first place, that certainly there is one sense, and that a sense in which a doctrine of a divinity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is very commonly held, which steers altogether clear of all difficulty, and in which the doctrine of the divinity of the three

persons, as they are called, is never, I suppose, imagined to interfere in the least with that of the unity. I mean the sense in which the Father is held to be God as regarded in one mode, relation, or aspect, or as the original and originating principle of all life and creation: the Son as the same God viewed in another aspect or aspects, chiefly in that of Redeemer; and the Holy Ghost the same God as viewed again in the aspect or relation of Sanctifier. That in this sense moreover the Son is truly said to be God, and the Holy Ghost God, and yet compatibly with there being not three Gods, but one God, I suppose that all agree.* And all agree also that we do really hold all these relations to the one God:—although whether or no this statement of our being in these relations to him exhausts all that we may know and believe of him, is a different question, and a question which I must reserve for my next letter. For the present I only need repeat that certainly here is one sense, and that a very important sense, in which the doctrine of the divinity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and that of the unity, are clearly compatible.

2. Secondly.—I add that in whatever sense we account of the Son or of Christ, or of the Holy Spirit as God, it is wholly impossible that while we do but believe that there is only one God, this sense can be a tritheistical sense. If a man do but really hold that there is but one God, it is wholly impossible for him to worship three Gods. And this doctrine that there is only one God, is moreover a belief which, if we do but hold to the Scripture, we cannot but imbibe. Every page of that holy book either assumes, or reiterates, this one great

* "This doctrine," says Mr. Norton, "is nothing more than simple Unitarianism, disguised, if it may be said to be disguised, by a very improper use of language." *Statement of reasons*, p. 9.

principle of the divine unity, or the doctrine that God is in all his aspects and operations the one same infinite and unchangeable power, and goodness, and mercy, and Lord and providence; that he is the same one Lord in nature, in Christ, in the spirit, in all the good and evil of this world, and in the promise of the next. Neither yet is there, or can there be, any principle or doctrine easier than this to be learned. If there be any one principle out of the pale of the visible creation, which the most ignorant of all beings can understand and believe, this is the principle. If he cannot be taught this, he cannot and will not be taught anything. If he do learn to understand and believe this, he cannot possibly be either a tritheist, or an idolater.

3. Lastly, also on this subject, and more particularly, it is plain that before we can clearly affirm what it is to infringe on the divine unity, we must understand and know clearly what that unity is, or what we mean by it. And this unity, we have to observe, is the unity of God, the unity of the Infinite. But God, as is repeatedly observed by many of the fathers,^b does not come under number. In other words, numerals have not any meaning when spoken of Him.^c If, concurrently with whatever distinctions may be affirmed to subsist between Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be yet still regarded, as by all authorities they are always

^b Not, however, very consistently with their ordinary doctrine of *numerical* distinctions between the persons. See note G, at the end of these Letters.

^c This expression that "God does not come under number," has very much the air at first sight of a mystification. But to mystify is to attempt to make words accepted as having a meaning which have in reality none. That attempt must, of course, be always an error, and Sherlock who treats largely of this doctrine of the Fathers in his work on the present state of the Socinian controversy (Sect vi. p. 243, &c.) does not keep clear of it. But nevertheless the only proper meaning of the expression that God "does *not* come under number," is on the contrary, to prevent words which have no meaning from being accepted as having it. See again note G.

stated to be, as perfectly consentient, and equally infinite, the pluralism of the expression cannot be understood to designate them as other than one. The perfect consentience of Infinite beings, supposing that we may use the word Beings, is one consentience. No other unity of the infinite or illimitable possibly can or is ever attempted to be inferred from the divine works, or can to our apprehension ever exist.^d I do not say that there are not some who believe in three Gods. I believe that there are many who do so. But then those three are not infinite and consentient. Wherefore all persons who believe in the divine consentience, that is, practically, all simple-hearted men, who, however inconsistently they may talk, yet honour the Son, as they honour the Father, and the Father as the Son: also all clear-headed men, like Bull and Sherlock, who, though they may commit the error of attempting to define the undefinable, yet reject altogether every notion of Polytheism, are not, and cannot be, in real belief the Tritheists which their language may sometimes seem to imply them to be.^e—We need not trouble ourselves farther, I think, with the objection of Tritheism. We have nevertheless to remember that though thus even the great error of *speaking* of God as if he were many Gods, may be greatly reduced, may in some respects be almost neutralized by the *thinking* of him only as one, the error is a great error still. *Words are things*. The majesty of the conception, the simplicity of the faith, the submission of the understanding to a nature confessed to be inscrutable, and the reliance of the heart on an incomparable, and uncontested, and infinite superior are all bound up with the acknowledgment of the Divine unity as both our safeguard and

^d See as before, note G.

^e See before, p. 49.

guide in every thought of him which we can venture to form, or to which revelation teaches the way.^f

We are now met by the ordinary objections to the words, Trinity, substance, and person.—The word Trinity I certainly think an unfortunate word, and I wish that it had never been brought into use. It *seems* to the hasty eye inconsistent with unity. And yet in truth it assumes the unity. It is a word which has no meaning except as the title or appellative of the doctrine that we speak of God, and of the one God, in speaking of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. *Some* summary appellative of this doctrine can scarcely be dispensed with, and this cannot now be discarded. Neither yet does the use of this word, as far as I have observed, really suggest or offer any actual difficulty to the simple apprehension of an unconfused understanding. Only state the proposition that there is a Trinity in the Godhead, to any tolerably intelligent, though scholastically uneducated person, who has never been taught to look out in it for something hard, and he will find it easy. He seizes hold instantly of the perception that we are not taught that there are three Gods, because we are taught to look at God in three aspects, of the old analogy that light, and heat, and radiation may unite in the same principle, or of the visible fact that the same triangle may have three sides, an illustration not the less pertinent because often treated with ridicule, or because it meets us, or rather used to meet us, in a multitude of old prints, and pictures, and churches. Whether these analogies comprise or no the whole of the doctrine of the Trinity, is a point which, as I have already said, I reserve for the present. But certainly so far as these go, it goes along with them clearly and easily.

^f See note G, as before

In the next place, with regard to the word Substance. I allow that it is a word which is often used unmeaningly. If we ask what is intended by saying that God is a substance, we are told in answer that it means that God is a being, or that God is what he is. No folly can be more absolute than this, and almost the whole of the Trinitarian controversy, as it is ordinarily carried on, arises from the not seeing the folly of it. But then, when we speak of the Son and the Spirit, as consubstantial with the Father, the mind, though ignorant of what substance is, still catches through the dim phrase the real meaning, that Father, Son, and Spirit, are but one. Neither yet, unless we suppose the word to denote something grossly tantamount to the carving of an image or images out of the same block, or the same quarry, is it any way possible to mean by it anything else. And this is clearer still, if indeed anything so clear can by possibility be made clearer, if we recollect that the word, which we commonly translate, and translate very ill, into our word substance, may be rendered more exactly by the word *essence*, and that the essence, and the incommunicable nature, of God are one and the same. Thus much with regard to the use of the word Trinity, and the word Substance.

With regard to the use of the word Person; if it be our duty or wisdom, as I have shown it to be, to *personalise* God in many senses, I really do not see how it is possible to avoid the accounting of him as a *person* in each sense. Certainly we look at him in one way, when we see or acknowledge in the more abstract or general sense, his infinite, and of course inconceivable energy of goodness and power: in another way, when we look at the same goodness or power, as expressly and particularly revealed to us, both in the visible creation,

and also in the life and doctrine of Christ ; and again, in another way, as present with us in the Holy Spirit. But this is to look at him in so many persons : and this, I suppose, is the only *definite* sense in which all tolerably educated Trinitarians, not bewildered by controversy, do really understand the word. Whether there may not be something more in the Trinitarian doctrine than the word person thus understood will be found to express, is, as I have already said,^g a different question. But how such a man as Mr. Norton can be led to censure absolutely the use of this word *person*, in speaking of God as manifested in Christ,^h and at the same time admit, and almost contend, that under certain circumstances we may, or must, speak of God as *personified* in him,ⁱ is to me surprising. Neither yet do I see that the doctrinal clauses of the Athanasian creed itself are ordinarily considered as teaching anything else than this same true and unimpeachable doctrine, which I yet allow that it attempts to define much too precisely. I even think that these clauses sometimes tend to remove difficulties, instead of creating them ; and that it is often a natural and unbiassed impulse of the unprejudiced reader or hearer to wonder that any fault should be found with them. At any rate, I know that I wondered at this myself, when I was a child. And I believe nothing to be more certain than that the popular objections to this creed are based not on the doctrinal, but wholly on the damnatory clauses which it contains, clauses for which I am sorry ever to be called on to plead even the sound casuistry by which we defend them.

All these words, therefore, thus objected to, are, as it seems to me, something more than defensible. They are

^g Page 51.

^h Statement, pages 8, 9.

ⁱ Statement, page 234, and see Notes, D and E, at the end of these Letters.

not only *capable*, which is all that many persons would think it necessary to contend for, of being understood in a good meaning, but their real meaning is good. That is, they are, or were, either necessary or useful, to convey the truth which they were meant to teach; and it would at any rate be hard now to relinquish them.

At the same time, it is to be recollected that the importance, whether great or little, of these words, as indeed of all words, is an acquired, not an inherent importance, and moreover that they are not Scriptural words: and that our faith, as all its exponents agree, “does not consist in this or that form of words, but in the belief of the things themselves that God hath made known.”^k Only let us believe that God is everywhere, kind, powerful, just, that he was eminently in Christ; and that he is always acting and aiding in every good thing which we think or do,—let this doctrine be believed, as all intelligent Christians do believe it; and then, whether or no we use the word Trinity, or the word Substance, or the word Person, is a matter of indifference. But I apprehend that practically they are, among all real believers in God’s unity, rather helps towards that intelligence, than impediments to it. To this it is moreover to be added, that whatever words we use, or whatever canons, if we choose so to speak, of doctrine we adopt, we cannot get rid of all risk of evil or error. There must be, there always is, the risk on one side of keeping ourselves too far off from God, and on the other side of forming too gross or humanlike conceptions of him.^l But this is an

^k Archbishop Synge’s Paraphrase of the Athanasian Creed, page 64, ed. of 1715. ὥσπερ ἐν ὀνόμασι κειμένης ἡμῶν τῆς εὐσεβείας, ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐν πράγμασι. Greg. Naz. apud Suicer. in voce *ὁπίστας*.

^l See pages 38, 39.

alternative from which the nature of language itself, and of our human perceptions, does not allow us, under any circumstances, to be exempt, and in which nothing is, or can be left to us, except to correct in either case, the erroneous leaning as well as we may.

Very truly, my dear Sir, yours obediently,

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LETTER VII.

Of the doctrine of the Unitarians ; and this under two heads : First ; the practical character and import of our difference from them, in the worship of Christ : and Secondly ; the statement to be made of the theoretical difference between our doctrine of the Trinity, and their doctrine of God.

MY DEAR SIR,

I think that I have proved to you quite uncontestedly in my two last letters that Christ is God, and therefore that same one God whom we all acknowledge. On this point, I think that I have said enough, and also that I have both sufficiently shewn the value of this doctrine itself, and cleared away the objections to it.

And yet there is a class of Christians who, although they may humble themselves, and I trust do humble themselves before God with not less thankfulness than our own for the revelation in Christ, yet do not, or cannot, receive the doctrine that he who was man, was also God, and, as God, the direct object of adoration and prayer. It is impossible not to desire to trace, as far as we can, the bond which unites us with, no less than the difference which severs us from, men not less sincere than ourselves in our common worship of the one Supreme. By the tracing out of this bond, we may also learn to

distinguish with the more exactitude that line which must of necessity exist somewhere between the little which we know, and the much which we do not know, of the divine Being, within which line we all desire to walk, and beyond which it is vain to try to advance.

But this difference divides into two heads. 1. The first, the practical, which is in the worship of Christ. 2. The second, the theoretical, which is in the sense which we ascribe to the words, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in the doctrine of the Trinity. For that there is a sense in which a doctrine of the Trinity may be held in common both by us and the Unitarians has been already observed.* Both these heads I shall treat of in their turns.

1. In respect, then, of the first head, the difference is this : that **WE**, holding as much as they can hold, God to be one, yet recognise and worship that one God in Christ, or Christ as God, or God in that manifestation of his own self. **THEY** throw themselves before the same God in the same devotion and humility, and with the same thankfulness for the revelation by Christ, and the perfection of his personal example ; but yet forbear to give to Christ himself the title of God, or to address their prayers personally to him. **WE**, when we come to lie on the bed of death, shall pray to God in the words of the first martyr,—“ Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” In our ordinary devotions we entreat the same redeemer, by his agony and passion, for mercy and grace. **THEY**, on the contrary, disclaim these expressions as improper and even offensive, and interpret the language of St. Stephen as merely an impassioned exclamation, not to be brought into precedent as the correct or authorised language either of faith or of prayer. At the same time, however,

* See Head 1, pp. 50, 51.

THEY recognise, or may recognise, as fully as we do that same mercy and loving-kindness of God, in which this same Redeemer came into the world, and suffered for sin. If they do not address themselves to Christ as God, they may yet, and do, pour themselves out in thankfulness to God, with pious and particular reference to his goodness in Christ. They will not, or ought not, to say, "O Christ, save us." But yet they will thank God for sending Christ, and for exhibiting in him that manifestation of holiness, by the imitation of which we may be made like unto himself. I do not think this difference a slight difference. I think, as I have already shown you,^b that the right of addressing Christ directly as God is a right of consummate value and importance to our poor human nature and weakness, and that if we were without it, much of that devotion, of which we see the groundwork only in Christ, would be lost in the transfer to another and different being. Neither yet do I see the least force in that only argument which the Unitarians produce on their side, namely, that it is impossible to conceive the existence of two natures in Christ. Doubtless it is impossible either to understand or believe anything of the physics or metaphysics of any inscrutable process by which the two natures may have been united in him ; but it is in the same manner impossible to comprehend the process in which the prophets were inspired, or in which the union exists between the soul and the body. But there is not, on this account, any difficulty in recognising the *fact*, as in the one case, so also in the others.^c

Though this, however, be, I think, clearly so, it is not the less certain that no error of good men ought ever to be approached or regarded, either with the disposition to

^b See Letter IV. p. 37, to the end.

^c See pp. 30, 31, and Note B *ibid*.

exaggerate, or without the feeling that God in his goodness gives always to the honest and pure heart some means of escaping every evil consequence which it may tend to produce. The Unitarian does not worship Christ as God. I think, as I have said, that he is wrong in not so worshipping him. He does not take the best way of testifying, or rather of acquiring, an adequate, as far as any human sense can be an adequate, sense of the obligations which we are under to God, and of what he has done for us. But still the great end of all is to acquire, as far as may be, that sense itself. The means, important as they are, are nevertheless means only, and not the end itself. If the Unitarian pour himself out more fully and freely before God in thanks for his goodness : if he appreciate more and more humbly than we, the need of redemption : if he learn to imitate what he thinks the human example of our Saviour better than we imitate what we acknowledge to be the divine : he is the better Christian than we, the better servant of both our God, and of our Lord. This truth is not in any degree the less certain, even though he does not own Christ to be what he is, and though his faith has swerved in its expression from that consecrated language both of antiquity and of Scripture which we will not desert. This, like so many others, is one of those cases in which equity of mind, and vigour of step, and sincerity of purpose, may much more than make up for taking a narrower path, or a path which affords us not so much help on our way. Do not let *us*, therefore, while we keep stedfastly to our own path, imagine that our ends, and even all our best spiritual sympathies may not agree. Sorry as we are to lose from our communion such men as Lardner and Taylor were, or as Mr. Norton is, we cannot, while they think themselves barred from joining with us in the worship of Christ, wish them to

stay in it, or to come over to it. Assuredly also we cannot desert that worship ourselves. But they still may be, and are, at heart or in spirit, both our own brethren and the brethren of our Lord, united with us in the same desire of truth, and of worshipping the Almighty one in the right way, a desire which is in itself the surest bond of love, no less than the provocative both of love and of good works.

2. I now come to my second head : namely, that of the sense in which we use the words Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in the doctrine of the Trinity. One sense, certainly, in which these words are used, is a sense, in which, if we go no farther than that sense, the doctrine of the Unitarian concurs with our own. I, of course, mean that sense which I explained to you in my last letter,^d or in which the Trinity is called a modal Trinity, and said to coincide with Sabellianism, and in which the persons are accounted of as merely the names of different relations or characters in which that confessedly one God who sustains them all exists to his creatures. No agreement can be more perfect than that of the Unitarians with ourselves in acknowledging in God an original principle of life, action, creation, goodness, justice, and power. We also agree in acknowledging that the Divine goodness and power were eminently, most eminently, displayed in our Saviour Christ ; and this with miraculous attestations of his authority. Both we and the Unitarians look, or endeavour to look to him, as indeed I observed sufficiently under my last head,^e and to the divine perfections evidenced and emblazoned in him, as our guide and pattern of the life which conducts us to that future union with God to which we are taught to aspire. And we also

^d See Head I. pp. 50, 51.

^e See Head I. p. 60 seqq.

agree in holding that the same divine spirit which displayed or evidenced itself in the life of Christ, lives also, and acts, and is ever present with our own minds, in every good thing which we think or do.

In this doctrine we agree, a doctrine not altered in the least by our merely giving to God the title of God the Son, when speaking of him specially as putting himself forth in act, or as acting in Christ; or by speaking of him as God the Holy Ghost, when we speak of his moral influence on our hearts. But this difference, this merely giving, or forbearing to give, the title of God to the several aspects, or characters, or relations in which we regard him, is plainly, while we are aware that this is our whole meaning, merely verbal or nominal. It still may be, and I think is, a difference of moment. Words, as I have before observed to you,^f often are, and in an eminent degree when we speak of God, of very great moment indeed. They are so in this case, and I have not a doubt but that our words are the best. But still a difference which is merely nominal, does not alter in any case the theory of it, and so accordingly I believe that all Unitarians account of this doctrine of a modal Trinity as in substance wholly coincident with their own.^g We therefore and the Unitarians go together in the doctrine of the Trinity, so far as this exposition or explication of it goes, in which we so far agree, namely, in looking up to God in all these three relations and characters,^h as the original principle of life and salvation, as the redeemer and sanctifier.

^f Note p. 53.

^g See Note a, p. 51.

^h "Therefore these three acts (knowledge, self-reflection, and love, which are so distinct that they can never be the same) must be three substantial acts in God These are the true and proper characters of the distinct persons in the ever blessed Trinity."—*Sherlock's Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, p. 130; and see Hooker as cited Note H, at the end of these Letters.

And to this I add that all the practical applications of the doctrine are contained in this explication of it in which we agree. The whole intention of the doctrine, as far as it has a moral intention, is, and can only be, to impress on our hearts and minds the moral import and value of these relations. And it is moreover a doctrine which personalizes *all* the relations which we owe to God, or which we can be conceived to owe to him. "He cannot be more than these to us ; he cannot be less."¹ And if Scripture teaches us anything more of either the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost than nature can teach, it still is only as it affects our sense of these relations that even the teaching of Scripture on this head can be of any moral benefit to the soul. I might prove this by a thousand citations from the most considerable Trinitarian writers, if it could be for a moment doubted that so it must be.

What is there then which remains? We have seen quite clearly that we may both make out for ourselves, and that the sacred writers make out for us also on authority, that division or personalization which I have described of our own relations to God, or of God's to us. We have seen

¹ Many eminent writers contend that God is "a Trinity by the *necessity of his nature*, and cannot be otherwise." I do not like to speak of the necessities of a nature, of which we know nothing but through the analogies of our own. Nevertheless, if God's moral nature be what it is, *our conceptions of it*, that is, of what we know, and of all that we know of it, certainly do divide, and I do not see that it would be easy or natural to divide them otherwise than, into these same relations or personalizations of which I am here speaking. At any rate in these he is to us all that God is or can be : "fills all the characters" which we can imagine him to sustain. "No one can be all this to us, or any part of it, but Almighty God. He cannot be more than this to us, he cannot be less, if we are ever to be made happy. Whatever mercy or token of his love he would confer on us, in one or other of these characters he must bestow it. And since it is evident there must be these three characters of love in God towards us, it is evident that to make known this Trinity of characters is the proper business of revelation, and that the three persons must be these three characters. Even if there were any other Trinities in him, what could we have to do with them ? what could induce him to condescend to speak to us of them ?"

also that we both may and do aptly and reasonably divide or personalize all these our relations to God, into our relations to him as he is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as stated before. What is it, then, which remains to be added to this doctrine, or have we to add any thing to it? To this I answer, and, as I think, no less clearly, that over and above these personalizations of character or attribute, or of God's relations to us, and ours to God, the sacred writers plainly recognise, and therefore teach, that there exists also a real foundation for these same personalizations in the nature of God, or in the relations *inter se* of the powers and energies of the Divine mind. Of *what* these relations are in themselves we can be taught nothing, any more than of *what* that infinite mind is, in which they inhere. If God be incomprehensible, so must be his internal relations also, and what we cannot comprehend or understand we cannot believe. And this is the more evident because it is, I suppose, allowed that if they exist, they must necessarily come in somewhere between Tritheism and what is popularly called Sabellianism, and yet it is impossible to take up *any* definite or intelligible ground between the two.^b

Nevertheless, though it is thus certain that we cannot

^b This distinction or difference between the Divine powers "is represented in Scripture to be something more than such a difference as is between divine attributes, or nominal relations: and yet it seems to be something less than is between three distinct conscious minds, or three different intelligent agents in the literal sense of the words." (Watts's Works, Ed. 1812, vol. vi. p. 333, as referred to in Barling's Review of Trinitarianism, p. 171.) "The statements of revelation then lie between this internal and external view of the Divine essence, between Tritheism, and what is properly called Unitarianism." (Newman's Arians of the Fourth Century, p. 390.) But, says Mosheim, "the moment we come to define the words person, essence, consubstantial, we incur the charge of either Tritheism or Sabellianism. I will undertake to show that this is always the case." (Theologia Dogmatica, vol. i. Norimbergæ, 1764. Sect. i. Cap. ii. 312, p. 313.) Cf. Chrysostom de Sacerdotio, iv. 4, as quoted in Nares' Discourses on the Creeds, 271, 272.

define these internal relations of the Divine mind, it is not less certain on the other hand that the sacred writers do teach clearly that such relations exist. Without entering into the learning of the case, a learning which has been often greatly misused, nothing can be plainer than that the relations of God to his word, of the Father to his Son, of the sender to the spirit which he sends, are, if Father, Son, and Spirit be but the one God, to be accounted of not as relations of man to God, or of God to man, but as existing in God. They are relations analogous not to those in which we, as servants or disciples, are placed to a human master or teacher, but to the separate acts or energies of the master or teacher himself in thinking what he thinks, or doing what he does. And what the sacred writers teach us on this subject is that those same personalizations of those acts, or energies, or attributes, or characters, which I have stated before, have their root in his real essence. This is all, this is our whole case. Neither yet, I believe, is there any Trinitarian, who ever contends, with any real meaning, for anything else.

Neither yet do we, or need we, fail in this, as in every doctrine of true religion, to discern not only its truth, but also the wisdom of its adaptation to human wants or necessities. It is a doctrine which, in the first place, teaches us on authority, both the existence and the personality of that one original principle of Deity in whom almost every religion teaches to believe. If nature teach this truth of itself, it yet is not the less a most appropriate province of revelation to step in as it does, to teach it also. On this point the very existence and diffusion of the Pantheistic theory is proof enough.

In like manner the real personality of this same Divine principle, as he is an agent, as he creates, and as he redeems, and also as he sanctifies, is taught emphatically,

and removed the more clearly above the rank of an hypothesis, into the rank of a truth, by this same doctrine of the existence of a real relation or relations *inter se* in God himself. Incomprehensible and indefinite as these relations are and must be in themselves, or as to *what* they are, it yet helps our sense or sentiment of the personalizations which we found on them, to be thus told that there is in them that true basis, though of an unseen reality, which Scripture tells us that they contain. And to this I moreover lastly add, that this holy book, even in teaching us the existence of these internal relations of the divine mind, guards also this its teaching, at the same time, against every imaginable ingenuity of perversion into the error of believing that the mind in which they inhere can be other than one. They are relations analogous, as they must be,¹ to distinct relations or faculties of the human mind. They are the relations, as before, between the word, and the mind which dictates it, between the Son, and the Father from whom he springs, or between the sender, and the voice of comfort which he breathes, or sends. But these relations are at the same time real in themselves, and also indicative of the closest imaginable union of nature, or birth.

Thus wholly clear, as it seems to me, is our whole case; and this conclusion of it with respect to the existence of a real foundation in God himself for those personalizations of him which we make in our doctrine of the Trinity, not less clear than the rest: if only we take the teaching of the apostles on this point in that sense which they intended it to bear.—The only other remaining supposition is that they themselves mistook their own case; and that they intended to teach, what is not true, either Arianism, or some other form of Polytheism, or,

¹ See the quotation from Sherlock, note h p. 64.

what is nearly the same thing, that erroneous Gnosticism, if Gnosticism it is to be called, which, as I have already shewn you, I believe that they meant distinctly to oppose. That supposition is an intelligible supposition, and requires diligent sifting: but it is at least fitting that we should understand before we make it, what it really is, or what it means.

After this *reductio*, as I shall treat it, I do not go on with my case. To go farther would involve the whole question of the nature and character of the inspiration of the sacred writings, and also of the interpretation of the witness, which even if, in the common sense, not inspired, they may or must still be held to afford, to the truth and authority of the doctrines which they teach.—But still I ask to what purpose, or with what intent, we assail either the inspiration or the credibility of the sacred writers, if we assail it at all, in regard to this question here before us, namely, that of the Trinity.

All that the sacred writers say, on this subject, is that the powers and energies of the Divine mind are bonded together in Him the First Perfect and the First Fair, in some way which we do not understand, and on which therefore we do not pronounce, but of which our human analogies give us power to conceive thus much and thus alone, that the powers and energies are real, and that their connection is close. More than this, as I have already repeatedly observed to you, we do not, and we cannot say: and in saying this we also confess in the same breath that his ways are not altogether as our ways, nor his thoughts as our own.^k

Yours, my dear Sir, always,

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^k See Note F, at the end of these Letters.

LETTER VIII.

Of Pantheism.

MY DEAR SIR,

I think that I am now entitled to affirm that all the conclusions to which I have come in my preceding letters are quite irresistible. I will here add a few words in reference to that doctrine of Pantheism which is sometimes hastily identified with the doctrine of a divine mind, but which is in truth inconsistent with it. The obvious translation of the word Pantheism is that God is the universe. But there is no more meaning in saying that God is the universe, than there is in saying what you know has often been said, that the world is an animal. I do not suppose that any one can affirm that the world is not an animal. We can only affirm in strictness that it is folly to say that it is. In point of real meaning there are only two propositions which it is possible to make respecting the connection, or no connection, between God and the Universe. The one of these propositions is, that the world came by chance ; the other, that it came by design. If by chance, then Atheism is true : if by design, there was a designer. This is the whole case, there really is not in it anything else.—But a designer, it is said, must

be a person, and God is Infinite Mind. True, most true; but not the less every argument for design, or for a divine designer, which, inasmuch as every designer is a person, is precisely the same thing with the argument for God's personality, is an argument wholly independent of every conception which we can make to ourselves of God, supposing that we make any, and of every title or name by which we speak of him. It is also an argument which tells alike, whether we speak of him more generally and comprehensively as the one Infinite mind, or more particularly in any personification of his energies or attributes. It is also a doctrine wholly independent of the limitations which we may impose on our own power of pronouncing anything as to his nature, or as to the *modus* (and mind itself is only a human *modus*) in which he is, or in which we suppose him to exist. Even in speaking of him as mind, we merely affirm that we discern a significance in his works, similar, or analogous, to that which we discern in the works of human mind, or contrivance. But this significance is all, all that we can obtain, all that we want. It is all the same, as far as this matter of personality goes, whether we attribute this significance to a being invested with human form, who sits on some hill external to his creation, or whether we call it mere mind. The tendencies, the perturbations, the self regulating powers infused into the work, are alike in both cases from him the worker. Certainly that external God would be a personal God. Nothing was ever conceived of as more personal than the imagined Deities of the Heathen. But neither yet is God the less personal in *character*, because we exclude the gratuitous and superstitious imagination of personal *form*, and adopt instead the far nobler, although the abstract, conception of a designing mind, a mind co-extensive with everything made. If we do this,

God is that mind. If this be Pantheism, Pantheism is only an innocent word, the summary of the hypothesis. If the Pantheist in speaking of nature, or φύσις, account of that nature as informed and vivified throughout by mental energy, that mental energy, if he have any meaning in using these words, is to him as much a God, as if he called it Jehovah.—But then, on the other hand, if he believe nature to be inert, or its energies to be by chance, he then is an Atheist. Wherefore we have no medium between the notion that there is not any Divine at all, and the notion of a Divine, or of God's, personality.

Nothing, assuredly, can be more certain than this. Neither yet is it less certain that if the Pantheist go on hence to argue that inasmuch as all mind is one, all elements resolvable into the same unit or essence, therefore the human mind is only a portion of the divine, or resolvable into it, he goes wrong. He thus attempts to lay down a modus, or physiology, of connexion between the Divine and the Human, and also between the different units of the human family, for which he has not, and cannot have, any foundation. "All mind is one: all elements resolvable into the same essence." The affirmation is at the best unintelligible—as far as we understand it, it is false. In mind, speaking generally, I suppose that there is, and perhaps naturally, an analogy, perhaps it may be even called a kindredship, to mind,—possibly, to speak with reverence, in the mind of man to the mind of God. But it does not hence follow, that the pure, and the sensual, the benevolent and the malignant mind are one and the same. Neither yet, abstracting this difference of qualities, does it follow that the mind of John, and the mind of Peter, are the same mind. If we find two watches, we know that the maker of the one possesses a skill analogous to the skill of the other. But it does not

hence follow that they have the same maker. We are as sure of the individuality of minds and of consciences, as we are sure of the existence of mind itself. Wherefore in the most modified, or least intolerable, of all the forms, which, as far as I have seen, the Pantheistic notion has taken,—namely the notion that, inasmuch as man identifies himself with God by virtue, man must become God ; or in other words that the human mind is made one with the divine by becoming so identified,—there is still nothing but fallacy.—The fallacy, properly speaking, of all this talk is the same, whatever the analogy, parallelism, or dependency between one mind and another. However close the union which virtue may create between man and God, in whatever sense our minds may be said to be the offspring of the Supreme, he still is GOD, we are MEN. We do not limit in any degree the illimitable, or the sense in which all things are pervaded by God's power and influence. But it is not on this account the less certain, that our conceptions of our own efforts, and conscience, and will, as enlightened and inspirited by the Divine help, are wholly different from our conceptions of the divine designer himself, and controller of all things. In the same manner in which we know that the child, who looks up to, and asks his parent for help and support, is not identically that same individual parent himself. In truth this folly that God is everything, seems to me to be hardly anything else than a philosophical parody on the theological folly that he DECREES everything. If he is everything, we are GODS. If he DECREES everything, he decrees SIN. I really think that the theological folly, by much the least senseless inference from which is, that if sin gives pleasure, it is both wise and God's will that men should be sinners, is the least folly of the two.

To this it only remains, I think, to be added, that inasmuch as there really is one sense, in which the Pantheist and the Polytheist may be justly said to hold doctrines of near affinity to each other, this is not the sense in which I have been using the word Pantheist here. If Pantheism and Polytheism have anything in common, it must be through some identification of the one principle of the Pantheist with those various powers and manifestations in which it comes out in the Polytheistic creed. And I entertain no doubt but that among the priests, and *augurs*, and apologists, whether of Greek, of Roman, or of Egyptian Polytheism, the popular superstition was explained away into a very Pantheistic interpretation. But still all Polytheism is Personality. The only sense of the word Pantheism, in which it is brought into any opposition either to the Christian, or to any other religion, is that of excluding Personality in God, or is the same with Atheism. And if the heathen priests ran, as doubtless they often did, into this sense, they ran into a sense quite inconsistent in principle with that Polytheism which still they may have professed.

Thus much, then, for Pantheism. But has not all error some root in truth? It often has. And what remains true of Pantheism, if the word, which is but a bad word at best, may still be used at all, is that we exclude not the Infinite from any sphere whatever of either action or control. That great Being, or Principle, or First Cause, which we know to be Infinite, we know also, as far we know anything, to be Infinite MIND. This infinite MIND lives, and operates, and influences, in present and particular act, and operation, and providence, throughout the whole of existence, especially, however, and peculiarly, as I have before said to you, in all the thoughts of

the good man, that region, so to speak, with which it most nearly assimilates, and in all his worthiest actions and pursuits.

But if this may (I had almost said must) be true in nature, it is also the very truth itself which revelation teaches us, and to which it adds in the doctrine of the Trinity that distinctness both of expression and of personalization of which my former letters have, I think, explained to you sufficiently the meaning and use.

I am, my Dear Sir,

Your obedient Servant, &c.

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LETTER IX.

Of the reasons why God was in Christ by miracle, or with sanctions out of the common course of worldly events.

MY DEAR SIR,

One question still remains to complete the whole philosophy of our case. God, as I have sufficiently shown, was in Christ. But why, we may still dare to ask, was he in him by miracle, or why were Christ's coming, and the powers conferred on him, events which took place out of the common course of human affairs? Why, it may still be asked, this miracle? If God be, as he is, present in all things good, and therefore eminently in Christ, Christ may be, and is, an example, and it may be said, a divine example for all men, whether or no he were designated, either by miracle or by prophecy, as a special messenger from above. He is still, according to this doctrine or conception, the present image of paternal Deity, the pattern of all true greatness and holiness, the proof that the poor of this world, rich in faith, are the inheritors of that kingdom to which he himself belonged, and that the consummation of human virtue is to be found in piety to God, and in love of man, love even unto the death. Neither yet is it less true, even though there

were no miracle coupled with him, that the special object of both his life and his death was to promote our moral benefit, or to save us from sin. All this is true of him, at any rate, or though we read and believe nothing more of him than the accounts with which we are furnished of his teaching, and the events, even abstracting the miraculous events, of both his life and his death.

Doubtless, this is true : and I will even consent to allow that a man who holds thus much, may fairly be said, even though he disbelieves all the miracles which are related of Christ, yet still to account of him as having been divinely inspired. And I moreover allow that every man who thus holds thus much of what, so far as it goes, is real Christianity, shares the benefit of the religion, and will partake its reward. But still it would be an abuse of language to call that man a Christian. A Christian, according to all propriety of language, must be, at the very least, a man who believes that his divine master was a man who had not only imbibed in a surpassing degree the spirit of religion, but to whom it had also been communicated by some extraordinary process or manifestation. This extraordinary process or manifestation must also necessarily be supposed to have been distinct from, or independent of, those ordinary processes of action or thought, which wise and good men make out for themselves, or which are infused by the divine spirit into the greatest and wisest of our fellow mortals in the common course of human events. That is, a Christian must believe that Christ was, and is, a miracle, a special exertion or manifestation of God's providential care of mankind, not to be accounted for under its ordinary laws.

But, then, still why was there a miracle ? If every man who may be penetrated by the doctrine and example

of Christ may derive all the benefit from his coming which he ever affords to mankind, who can believe that the Deity not only comes down, but comes down *ex machina*, for the purpose of teaching what might have been taught *by*, what he might himself in the ordinary course of his providence have taught *through*, our mere humanity? If, merely as a superior Socrates, Christ could do no less for us than he does as the Son of God, why is he more? What can be the purpose, and on the part of him who does nothing in vain, of coupling either his coming into the world, his ministry in it, or his death, with any apparatus which the usual order of human affairs does not include?

To this question, I think that it may be very clearly and certainly answered:—

1stly. That a religion which is founded on miracles is necessarily a religion which possesses a far more direct and tangible evidence of truth and authority than ever was, or, I believe, can be, afforded by any moral or philosophical investigation, however correct, of the order of nature, or of the will of God. Perhaps this is the case especially, in respect to the great mass of mankind, but it is the case in at least some degree with respect to men of education also.—But if we are to have miracles, we must have a worker of miracles, and therefore a miraculous agency in Christ. To this it is moreover to be added that the miracle, that is the fact that our Saviour's coming and teaching were events, or coupled with events, exceptional to the common order of nature, must not only have been thus a useful evidence of the divine authority of the doctrines which he taught, but also a fact eminently impressive of those doctrines. There are many persons who will admit the truth of a doctrine, or who may be said not to doubt of it, or to give their adhesion

to it, on whom, nevertheless, it wants *enforcing*. And that this is *one* of the ends of Christ's miracles is a common remark. Some very ordinary reasoners suppose that they had not any other end besides.

2ndly. It was sufficiently shown, I think, in my fourth Letter, that it is of very great religious importance to us to be able to refer ourselves personally to God, or to the Divine mind, or to his particular presence and agency in all things, and especially in his own teaching of us through Christ. Let us now then assume all this, so shown, as being incontestibly true. Let us also assume it to be, as it is, a very pure and high philosophy, and to constitute the very basis of all the best expression of natural religion, and also of revelation itself. And let us also suppose that this doctrine gains, as I think it does gain, a very ready admission into the understanding. Let us assume, or grant, all this. And yet, true as it is, and as we Christians to our unspeakable blessing know it to be, it is still, without miracle, nothing but guess work. No doubt we have proof in abundance, whether there be miracles or not, of the existence of mind, or design, in creation, and consequently of a designer, a personal designer, and also of a moral, and other principles involved in the design. But as to the question whether the designer turned out the thing designed, with all those principles included in it, to work their own way, or whether he unintermittingly superintends and controls it, there is none who without a miracle can possibly tell. You say that the wheels of the design once set in motion go on by themselves. I say that they do not. Who shall decide ?^a Mine, doubtless, is the pleasanter belief of the two, has

^a Nihil ponderis habent ista praecepta, quia sunt humana, et auctoritate majori, id est, divina illa carent. Nemo igitur credit, quia tam se hominem putat esse qui audit, quam est ille qui praecepit. Lactant. Div. Inst. iii. 27, as quoted by Leland. Advantages of the Christian Revelation, i. 195.

the best names on its side, and perhaps also the argument which may be drawn from instinctive belief, or else from tradition—an argument which I do not by any means undervalue, or value slightly. But still this is not proof. And then, again, on the other hand, there is the insoluble problem of the existence of evil, together with the difficulty of reconciling with the doctrine of a supreme moral controller the fact that all things come in so great a degree, as they do come, alike to all; that the wicked so often prosper, while the good suffer from disease or penury, and are not always gifted with even the happiness of the mind. These are great difficulties, and though, as was said before, our inability to solve them ought not rightly to weaken our confidence in what we know, they have yet, in all ages, always agitated, and always must agitate, the serious mind. And the absolute decision that they ought not to be permitted to overcome our belief in the doctrine of providence can, as it seems to me, come from miracle, and from miracle only.

3rdly and lastly. If, as I have supposed, the great and characteristic end of Christ's mission was to teach this same doctrine of God's present and particular agency in the affairs of men, and of his paternal love for them, it seems to me that it would have been exceedingly strange that he should have been sent to teach, that is to declare, any such doctrine as this, and yet should not exemplify it. Granting, though I do not see it to be possible, that the doctrine could have been taught, and taught on authority, in some other way than by miracles, or that it could have been written, as perhaps it is, so deeply on the heart, that no philosophy can expunge its traces from the mind, it yet would be most incongruous, that if he were sent to tell, he should not also have been sent to exemplify it to us, in the only way in which it could be exemplified. I

do not dare so to reason on the acts of God, as to say that it would be actually incredible that he should have told us through Christ that he has on all occasions, and at all times, a present and particular interest for us, even without giving, though on this best and aptest of occasions, a particular or miraculous instance or proof of it. But it is at the least highly credible, and highly consistent with all which we know of nature in the largest and most comprehensive sense of the word, that he should thus use this most apt occasion of giving it. And this also the more, inasmuch as the miracles in which Christ is shewn to us, and especially the great and crowning miracle of the whole, are, in their moral nature, no less than in the power and evidence which they display, the most signal exemplifications possible of this same purpose of his coming. There is hardly one of them, even if we can find one, which is not characterised by that both fatherly and brotherly love for our human race, our instruction in which makes our knowledge of that present agency of God which it exemplifies, worth the having.

These, as it appears to me, are ends, and incontestible ends, which the Christian miracles do serve, if they be real. Whether or no they be real, must depend on the evidence for them. No doubt their claims must not be hastily assented to, or viewed without suspicion. Miracles are often falsely pretended, often believed too readily, and may be said to be, in their nature, improbable. But it is nevertheless certain that the exact measure of the improbability of the Christian miracles can be nothing else than the supposed improbability that the ends designated by them should have been ends contemplated in the original design of the world. And if this improbability be, as I think it is, nothing; or rather if it be, as I think it is, absolutely probable that these ends should

have been ends originally contemplated, then clearly the miracles themselves are probable also.

Moreover, it is, I think, worth considering, whether another presumption may not be raised in behalf of these miracles from the fact that they were vouchsafed, or said to be vouchsafed, at that very period in the world's history, in which it might be best said, or with the most meaning, that by its own wisdom it knew not God. The period of Christ's coming, and of his miracles, was that very period in which the doctrine of a divinity which occupied not itself with mankind had become prevalent, and had superseded the more natural, and in fact truer simplicity of older times. And this too was the case especially in the Grecian Schools, whence all opinions were most widely propagated into every region in which either civilisation or philosophy, or any of the purer opinions in all matters of religion, have been ever since destined to take up their abode.—But miracles put down that error more directly and completely than it can possibly be put down by anything else.^b

Ever, my dear Sir, yours truly,

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^b See Note H at the end of these Letters.

LETTER X.

Concluding observations on the moral and religious use and application of the doctrine laid down.

MY DEAR SIR,

One word more. I need not repeat that the doctrine, our own doctrine of the Trinity, which I have been setting before you in these letters, comprises the whole doctrine of that SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE, which pervades the whole of existence, which enlightens and governs every understanding which will receive it, and is specially present in God's best and most bounteous gifts to mankind. But yet I wish you to allow me here to call your mind once more, in conclusion, and somewhat more particularly than before, to the directly moral and religious uses and applications which this doctrine supplies, and for the sake of which we may suppose it to have been revealed. These its moral uses and applications are, as I apprehend, contained, every one of them, in the general principle, that the connection thus formed, or seen to be formed, with a superior mind, or with PROVIDENCE, is a

connection absolutely necessary both to unfold our understandings, and to strengthen our hearts. Man, it is certain, is not, and cannot be, either by or for himself alone. Look at him only in the affairs of this world. Leave him to himself : put him in solitude. If you give him books, there is always in these a relation to the mind of the writer. But what are mere books to supply the sympathies and communications of which he is in need ? He will not work out so well even the driest work of his closet, if kept altogether apart from all who can share his labour, as if he knows that he has a friend at hand, who can help him in his need. Much more in every moral effort. A child, who wishes to be a good child, will yet have no nerve in his goodness, unless it be strengthened either by the sympathies of other children, or by that early tenderness for the parental, or other domestic relations, which has wound itself round him. To have no brotherly or other fellowship with his own spirit, to have no expansion towards any other mind which hovers round his own, is notoriously to cramp, if not to destroy, every amiable and disinterested energy, and to bring him into a state either of cheerless melancholy, or of abject selfishness. This is nature, this is necessity. And it is on this principle, as I suppose we are agreed, that God comes in upon us, both in the actual and ordinary belief of every unperverted mind, and still more in the proofs which he has given us in his special revelations of what he really is to us. All these revelations are proofs that HE, at least, always is, and will be, unless we drive him away from us, our father and guide, always lending us strength for every moral effort, always the friend, to whom, as he heareth prayer, all flesh may come. This it is to personalize him : and these are the reasons, briefly

stated, why we do personalize him : and this also obviously in analogy to those personal relations which nature supplies us with to our human parents or friends.

But still, why personalise him in three characters ? I am, of course, as you see, presuming that we may dare to give the best rationale we can both of what God is, as far as he is revealed, and of what he has done for us. To this question, therefore, I answer here over again, as in one of my former letters,^a that these three characters comprise happily and significantly all those points of relationship to the Divine Being, to which it can be any way useful to us that our minds should be directed thus particularly and significantly. To show this the more clearly through those analogies, in which, and in which only, we can look for the interpretation of either his works, or his word ;—what is it which, in the conduct of human affairs, a child or a dependent does in cases analogous to the religious wants of mankind ? All these cases resolve themselves into the need of help, the need of hopefulness, and, lastly, into the practical means of obtaining the needed help. All these things are plainly needed : there is nothing else : there is not any want imaginable which the making provision for these wants thus stated, does not provide for.

How, then, are these wants to be supplied ? Here is the child : there is the father : or, let us here say, the friend. The friend we know, can, if he will, give the help : there is no doubt of that : but then will he ? or, rather, how are we to convince the child that he will ? The child knows, indeed, as we suppose, his friend's power and goodness. But he is also conscious of his own demerits.

^a See page 65

He may have a love for his friend, but it is a love which casts not out fear ; or he may have a fear which contends painfully with his love.

What is it then, which he does ? what is it which he looks for, and on which he tries to fix his mind ?—Certainly what he looks for in the moment, or rather in the perpetually recurring moments, in which his wants oppress or almost overwhelm him, is not the general impression of power, or dignity, or even of kindness, though in a personal friend. It is of what that personal friend has done for himself, or for others, in particular instances. This is the parent who has brought me up from my infancy, and who has supplied all my necessities, and forgiven my faults. The love so shewn is a love to which I may surely trust in this necessity. This is the same friend, who did so much for, who bestowed that particular relief on, my neighbour when he was in need. That neighbour of mine was ruined, was reckless, was about to leap into the very gulf which opened before his feet, when this our common friend came forward, and at the expense of great humiliation and suffering to the being most, and most deservedly, dear to him, of all beings in the world, set him free. Will he not do as much for me ?

I need not stay to show how close, how very close, this analogy is to the relation which man bears to God, or to the Divine Spirit, through Christ, nor yet that the particular proofs or evidences given through Christ of God's love, and of the character of his dealings with us, are the proofs, and helps, and consolations, and exemplifications, of which the pilgrim of this world is in want in his journey through it. Nor yet need I add anything to the proof which I have given in my former letters, that they constitute, as shewn in Christ, a personalization of God in him.—I

might shew the same also in like manner of the doctrine of his ever present spirit as personalized, though less clearly, in this doctrine also.

If it be said that the same doctrine might have been shewn otherwise, I answer nothing to what I can neither affirm nor deny. Enough that it is shewn thus: and that there is no conceivable mode in which it could be shewn better. As we see God in Christ, we see in Him the manifestation not only of every human virtue which we can even desire to imitate, but also of a divine love, which no merely doctrinal proposition, and possibly which no other personalization, could have brought so near to us, or could have made so effective.—Also, so far as we listen to the voice of his unseen spirit, we approach to the recognition of even God's own spirit, although unseen.—And the Scripture teaches us moreover that these personalizations or recognitions are TRUTH.

Here then, my dear Sir, I conclude. You observe that I have gone very much away from the book which you sent me: and certainly I must confess myself to be one of those potters, whose wheel turns out a vessel of somewhat a different shape from the shape designed. I am still very glad, however, to have read your book. Its author writes with the religious persuasion always before him of the perpetual presence of the one God, on whom we all depend, the author of our life, its receiver into immortality, and to whom it is as much his object as it can be yours or mine, to teach us to look in love, and in faith. This is the common end and object both of him, and of all such Unitarians as he is, and is also our own. It ought to be a harmonizing object; and this, our essential harmony of feeling;—although, while the Unitarian refuses to worship Christ, or to acknowledge him to be properly speaking divine, we cannot unite with him in the same

formularies of prayer or devotion—ought to keep us brothers still. I, at any rate, cannot consent, because of this difference which divides, and must divide us, to think myself debarred from the Christian fellowship of any man who seeks with the same sincerity to worship acceptably the same God : or not to acknowledge that his concurrent humiliation before God through Christ and the Spirit may be, and is, an offering, though by a less adequate and a less consecrated vehicle of expression, yet of the very same holy religion which we ourselves believe and confess.

Very sincerely, my dear Sir,

Yours always,

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NOTES.

NOTE A.—See p. 11.

Of the distinctions drawn by the Fathers between knowledge and faith.

It may be worth adding that the ordinary language of these writers in speaking of faith as one thing, and knowledge (*γνῶσις*) another thing, is not, if properly understood, in the least degree inconsistent with what I have said. Faith, they say, is *ὁρτομος γνῶσις*, or knowledge cut short. But no vision is clearer than that which can only see a short way.

Chrysostom (whom I only know, however, from Suicer, and in other citations) speaks of a *scent* of knowledge as distinct from knowledge itself.* But the scent is, or may be, as perceptible to the ignorant, as the knowledge can be evident to the wise. Chrysostom himself, in the very next sentence to that which I have here referred to, puts the whole logic of the case exceedingly well. "He that smells the scent," he says, "knows that there exists somewhere a substance which yields it. What sort of a substance he does not know, unless it be known to him beforehand from some other inlet of knowledge than the scent itself. And so we," he adds, "know that God is, but what he is we know not." And the case is necessarily the same with regard to all doctrines *about* God, as with regard to his existence. If we know that he is wise, we have no less clear a notion of his wisdom than we have of his being: although we do not comprehend, except in those relations in which he has revealed himself to us, either the one, or the other.

To this I beg to add, that though I do not suppose that the early fathers can have been altogether exempt from the error of many moderns in affirming the possibility of believing the unintelligible, I have never seen any one passage in their writings which can support the charge.

* Suicer, l. 771. ed. of 1682.

Athanasius, in his treatise de Incarnatione verbi, has the following sentence. Τὰ γὰρ μέγαρα καὶ δυσκατάληπτα τῶν πραγμάτων πίσει τῇ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν λαμβάνεται.* This apprehension by faith of the δυσκατάληπτα may seem at first sight like an apprehension of what is not understood. But the meaning is that those persons of low understanding who cannot apprehend the reasons, or perfect γνῶσις, or philosophy, of the doctrine taught, ought not the less to embrace (πεισθεῖεν ἐμμένειν) in faith the doctrine itself. They are not the less supposed to understand what that doctrine is. Certainly a πίσις λόγος was not held by ATHANASIUS to be either right or possible. See Suicer l. 198, 199. Vincent of Lerins has the following sentence: "Ex toto ecclesiæ dogmate quod intellectu capi potest capiant: quod non potest credant." Commonitorium, c. 20.

NOTE B.—See pp. 18 and 24.

Of the question as to the mode in which the doctrine of our Saviour's divinity was taught by himself, and by his immediate disciples.

The following question appears to me to be here worth asking. If the doctrine of our Lord's divinity was at first scarcely received, perhaps never received except very partially, amongst his immediate disciples, how grew up the subsequent belief? For I assume it to be certain that he was accounted of as God, though the Arians will say only as a second or secondary God, by the first Christian writers after the Apostles.

This question, which the Unitarians answer by endeavouring to shew that this belief grew up as a perversion of the original doctrine, I do not think that our scanty history of the early period to which it refers enables us to solve confidently. But if in such a case anything of conjecture may be allowed, that is, of conjecture as to the *history*, for I am not here arguing the *truth* of the opinion, I will venture to say what seems to me possible.

I first take the *fact*, that inasmuch as our Saviour did not avow himself even as the Messiah without much reserve, so he did not avow his divinity without equal reserve. He left both these truths, supposing them equally truths, to work and to force, in great measure, their own way. He was perpetually giving indications of them both, throwing out arguments, and making declarations, from which both might certainly be concluded: but still not so as to command an unhesitating or undivided assent even from his disciples themselves. We know that even after his resurrection from the dead they had a very imperfect, or rather

* Opera vol. i. p. 591, as quoted in Wilson's Illustration, p. 315.

erroneous comprehension of the true nature of his kingdom : and it is plain that whatever reasons there may have been for keeping up any reserve with regard to the true nature of his kingdom, must have applied with at least equal force to the doctrine also of his divinity.*

How came then this doctrine established ?

To this question it is, I think, to be answered, that, inasmuch as the doctrine of Christ's Messiahship appears to have become fully established in the minds of the Apostles immediately after the ascension, or from the period of the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, we can hardly suppose the doctrine of his divinity, if true, not to have been also revealed to them, and established in their minds, at the same time. It is, however, quite consistent with this supposition, that the same wise reasons which led our Saviour himself in his addresses to the Jews to withhold, in a degree, the assertion of his own most rightful pretensions, may, and probably would, have operated with his Apostles also. Whatever regard was due to the prejudices of the Jews during his life, must, as we cannot but imagine, have been due afterwards to the same prejudices : and the evidence of the same truths may, I imagine, have been intended to work its way in at least some degree in the same manner. His works, wrought as they were, *proved* him to be God. Much of his language implies, and I think implies certainly, the same truth. But we may still imagine that the proof was to be converted, or advanced, into the rank of conviction and sentiment, before it could be wise for him to assume, or for his Apostles to bestow on him, the divine title, with the same undoubting demand of universal sympathy in the use of it which we claim now. I think, moreover, that the language used in speaking of our Saviour throughout the Acts of the Apostles very much strengthens this view of the case. So much for the first part of it.

The next part of the case is, that this same evidence *did* work its way, as had been intended, and without much delay. Of this we have the decisive proof that St. Paul addresses his epistles to persons who plainly recognized his blessed master's possession of absolutely divine powers and attributes. The apostle assumes these powers and attributes for Christ, not less clearly than Christ assumed them for himself in his own acts and discourses. See for example, Rom. xiv. 9. ; 1 Cor. ii. 8. ; and 1 Eph. xx. 23. Wherefore both the apostle, and the disciples to whom he wrote, believed him to be divine. The only way out of this conclusion is to contend that when St. Paul tells us that Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be the Lord both of the dead and living, nothing more is meant than that we are judged by the law which he revealed. So, where he calls Christ the Lord of Glory, where he speaks of him as set at God's own right hand in heavenly places, as having all things put under

* Apostoli, post tot conspecta miracula, post editam illam coelestem professionem ; tu es Christus, filius Dei vivi ; tamen, velut illa per somnium dicta fuissent, multa de eo, tanquam de homine puro, loquantur. Erasmi. Suppt. error. Bedæ Prop. 54. q. ly Courayer. *Traité de la Divinité de J. C.* p. 249.

his feet, and as filling all in all, and to the same effect in other passages which I might cite.* Did or could St. Paul mean all this as nothing but a mere eulogium on the moral excellence of the Christian religion, and a rhetorical *prosopopoiia* of the great and good man by whom it had been revealed, but whom nevertheless he did not account of as anything more to the Christian than Moses before had been to the Jews? If he did not mean more than this, or could be interpreted by either Romans, Ephesians, or Corinthians as meaning no more, I leave it to others to solve the difficult enigmas which arise on every side. But if he did mean more, he represented Christ as possessing Divine attributes, and addressed himself to persons who recognized his possession of them, and who therefore received him for God.

Thus much may be conjectured, I think, as to the very early history of this doctrine during the period which preceded the writings of St. John.

My next conjecture is, that the doctrine having become thus established, a disposition naturally sprung up among the philosophizing Jews, perhaps those of Asia Minor especially, and perhaps among many Platonizing Gentiles also, how to explain it, or in what consistency with their received opinions. Into what these opinions were, I do not purpose to enter here. I have already spoken of them briefly in my fifth Letter, p. 43, sq., where I also observe that I suppose that St. John brought in the true doctrine that the word was God in direct reference to them, or for the purpose of guarding this true doctrine against the errors into which these opinions had led, and tended to lead. With this purpose he at once identifies God with Christ, and so places Christ above the rank of a merely substantial form, or angel, or effluence: and at the same time leaves undisturbed that doctrine of a reality of distinctions in the Divine, as there is also in the human nature, which although necessarily undefinable and incomprehensible, may still be, and is, recognized by the apostle as being true.

This, I suppose, to have been the direct meaning of the apostle, and that very many parts of his Gospel, were, as indeed has always been the common belief, intended to strengthen it. Ever since the publication of his Gospel the general belief in our Saviour's divinity has certainly never for one moment decayed. A thousand vain explications were attempted both in that age, and in the ages which followed, as to *how* he was divine. The simplicity of the apostolical doctrine, if ever recognized, was yet soon obscured. The current philosophy of the age would not always *take* the correction which St. John meant to apply to it. But still the doctrine that Christ was a partaker of the divinity, or really divine, is a doctrine which has always since that period of its establishment kept its ground. So also it must ever keep it, unless either the authority of the sacred writers be denied, or till it be proved that they did not

* See particularly Col. i. 15. sq. and ii. 2, 3, 9, 10.

account of Christ personally either as God, as Judge, or as Lord. For God he is and must be, if he possessed in himself personally, or as I may say with Tertullian* *suo jure*, the attributes of divine power and goodness and mercy, in any greater degree or fuller right than they can be said as explained in pp. 19, 20, to belong to any merely human instrument or minister of another's will.

One question more. If Christ was merely a man, and St. Paul in calling him the Lord of Glory and so forth, in the passages to which I have already referred, meant only to speak of him as man, how came Cerinthus, or any one else, to suppose he was an æon or attribute? This supposition implies that he had previously been accounted of as more than man. Cerinthus, therefore, could not have interpreted St. Paul as the Unitarian *must*, as I have said, interpret him now. Nor yet would St. John, supposing Christ's mere humanity not to be an error, have found on this subject any error on which to advert.

NOTE C.—See page 44.

Extract, illustrative of the doctrine of archetypal ideas, from Norris's Sermons.

To show the *possession* which this doctrine has retained of some minds in even modern times, I copy the following passage from a Sermon by Norris the Platonist:—

“God, as being infinitely perfect, must needs be supposed to include within his essence, after an intelligible manner, all degrees of reality, the whole possibility of being. But, besides, how else could God make the world, how could he *create*, unless he be supposed to have in himself the ideas of all things? For though the world was made out of *nothing*, yet it must be made according to *something*, and where could that something be but in God, when as yet there was not anything existing but God. The *natural* existence of things is founded upon their *ideal* existence: and if things had not first existed in *idea* they could never have existed in *nature*. If God made all things with counsel and design, if his wisdom was then assisting to his power (as who dare say it was not, especially since *wisdom* herself says that she was present at the making of the world), it is most certain that he must have the ideas of all things in himself, and that he made all things according to those eternal ideas. For there can be no design without thinking, and there can be no thinking without ideas, without an immediate object of thought. Besides, had not God an eternal foreknowledge

* See Note p. 18.

of all his creatures? But how, or in what could he eternally foreknow them, but in himself, and by his own eternal ideas? If, then, God foreknew them from all eternity, it is certain that they *were* from all eternity. But they were not thus in *nature*, therefore they were thus in their ideas only, ... not in their *natural* but in their *ideal* entities."*

This extract is, I think, the more illustrative of the position from which both the writer himself, and the philosophers of the fourth century, looked at the doctrine of the Word, because certainly no other writer ever held more firmly or distinctly the identity and universality of the one Divine Mind in all its various manifestations or acts. "If God," he says, "has an infinite essence, he must also have an infinite presence . . . is the *foundation* as well as the efficient cause of our existence, and the soul has her being *in* God, as well as *from* him. Then is it not a necessary consequence that there is an immediate union between God and the soul? The Apostle thought so, and proves the very same conclusion by the same argument (Acts, xvii. 27, 28). God penetrates our being, and contains us—he is our *place*. The union which we have with bodies, or which bodies have with each other, is nothing to this strict union which the soul has with God, who indeed is more intimately united with his creatures than they are or can be with one another."† But if a writer thus deeply and characteristically persuaded of the universality of the presence and agency of the one Divine, was also no less persuaded of the necessity of there being a world of forms and ideas through which even the Divine must think and act (*forms* and *ideas* so real and substantive, as described in the former extract), much more would they be so spoken of, or conceived of, by persons less clear in their apprehension or acknowledgment of the existence, or of the universality of operation, of the one God.

On Plato's own doctrine on this subject I may refer to Cudworth or Mosheim. Or I may ask you to compare with the first of the two preceding quotations from Norris the following note by Ludovicus Vives to Augustin de Civ. Dei VII. 28,—"*Ideæ Platonice ab spectando sunt dictæ—quoniam qui aliquid est acturus ideam inspicit, ad quam suam actionem aptet, ut pictori, qui de exemplari aliquid pingit, hoc exemplar est idea. Idcirco sic finitur exemplar rei agendæ. Sunt omnium rerum apud deum ideæ, quas spectans ille fabricator mundi singula in lucem, mundumque edidit. Itaque Platoni tria sunt universorum principia: mens quæ opus conficit, Deus ipse; materia, ex qua fabricatur; et exemplar, quod cum aliquid agit spectat. Cum opus hoc naturæ Deus editurus esset, exemplar ei adfuit quod sequeretur, ut in Timæo scribit. Non ergo solum singulæ rerum species, sed cælum, elementa, ipsumque universum, quod τὸ πᾶν dicunt, principium sui habuit ideam.*"

* Sermons, vol. III. p. 219—222. Ed. of 1693.

† Sermons, p. 202—205.

Ideas vero, id est formas omnium simplices et æternas esse, nec corporales tamen. Esse autem ex his quæ Deus sumpserit exempla rerum quæ sunt, eruntque, nec posse amplius quam singularum specierum singulas imagines in exemplaribus inveniri: gignentiumque omnium ad instar cere formas et significationes ex illa exemplorum figuratione signari." Or see Brucker on this subject.

NOTE D.—See pages 47, 56.

Of the reasons for personalizing God, as stated by Mr. Norton.

Mr. Norton, in the passage to which I have referred,* observes, or I think we may say, concedes, that there exists a foundation for the doctrine of the Logos, "in the nature of the being contemplated, and of the human mind. The Deity conceived of as existing within himself, removed from all distinct apprehension of created intelligences, dwelling alone in his unapproachable and unimaginable infinity of perfections, presents a different object to the mind from the Deity operating around us, and within us, and manifesting himself, as it were, even to our senses. It is not strange, therefore, that these two conceptions of him have been regarded apart, and more or less separated from each other. The notion of the Logos, it is true, is obsolete: but we find something analogous to it in the use of the term *Nature* in modern times. Employed as this often is, the mind seems to rest in some indistinct notion of an agency inferior to the Supreme, or an agency, to say the least, which is not referred directly to God."

I believe that this is a correct statement both of the case and the principle: and I think it very probable that if St. John had written in modern times, he might have thought it no less desirable to teach us that Nature is God, than to teach us the same doctrine concerning the Logos, or Life. Thus far, therefore, and indeed wholly, on this point, so far as I see, in the matter of principle, I have the satisfaction of agreeing with this able writer. I moreover think that he traces very well the natural process by which, in the philosophy taught by Philo, and prevalent at the time when St. John wrote, all the attributes of God manifested in the creation and government of the universe were made, abstractedly, from God himself, an object of thought under the name of the Logos. "The Logos thus conceived of," he adds, "was necessarily personified, or spoken of figuratively as a person." We want, I think,

* Statement, 231—234.

no more than this, both to explain and to justify our own language quite sufficiently, as indeed I have shewn in detail in pages 35—37.

But Mr. Norton proceeds as follows,—“In our own language, in describing its agency,—agency in its nature personal, and to be ultimately referred to God, we might indeed avoid attaching a personal character to the *Lógos*, considered abstractly from God, by the use of the neuter pronoun *it*. Thus, we might say, all things were made by *it*. But the Greek language afforded no such resource, the relative pronoun in concord with *Logos* being necessarily masculine.” But then, in the first place, we do not want to consider the *Logos* abstractly from God. Secondly, there exists not in this case any real difference between *it*, and *he*, except that God, as the universal agent, is better designated as *he* than *it*. Might we not call Nature *she*? Thirdly, and lastly, does this truly learned and sensible writer really think, that if there existed any difference worthy of regard in the use of one gender rather than the other, the Greek language, of all languages in the world, would have led the Apostle into an ambiguity, and not afford the means of correcting it?

NOTE E.—See page 56.

Of Dr. Whately's statement concerning the meaning of the word Person in the doctrine of the Trinity: and of his observation that this doctrine is indistinctly explained.

Dr. Whately, in his note on the word Person in the appendix to his Logic, observes that the Latin Fathers used this word in a different sense from what is now its ordinary sense. And he quotes with approbation a long passage from Wallis, in which the well known sentence of Cicero, “*Tres personas unus sustineo*,” is alleged as illustrative of the correct signification of this word in the doctrine of the Trinity. Compare a very learned note on this subject, by Mr. Newman, in the eighth volume of the Library of the Fathers, page 170.

Now, that God is three persons, using the word person in this sense, I suppose that all Christians agree. All account of the same one great being as sustaining the different characters of Father, Redeemer, and Sanctifier: and I have shewn, in pages 55, 56, of these letters, that I see no adequate reason for objecting to the use of the word person in this sense, and also that there is nothing in the doctrine of the Trinity which adds, or can add, anything else to this doctrine, except that these same persons, or personalizations, have a real foundation in the nature of God. See page 65, seqq.

I am at a loss, however, to imagine what Dr. Whately's meaning can have been, in making this observation, or in attaching any importance to it, as affecting the Trinitarian doctrine itself. He does not suppose that the doctrine resides in the words used to express it: nor yet that the meaning of the Latin Fathers in using the word *persona* was different from the ordinary meaning of the Greek Fathers in using either the word *πρόσωπον*, or the word *ὑπόστασις*.^{*} Still less can he imagine that the sacred writers themselves, in speaking of God as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost intend to speak of the aspects or characters of God in relation to man, and not of the internal relations in God himself. See on this subject what I have said in pp. 65—67. Dr. Whately is well aware that the earliest and most valuable of the Fathers say that the Father and the Son differed *numerically*.[†] But to say this, or to say that they were two in substance, though but one in concord and agreement,[‡] is nothing less than a direct affirmation of their differing more, or otherwise, than in mode or character.—But to return to the sacred writers themselves. Either these writers did mean to speak of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as God, or they did not. If they did not, the question is at an end: there is no Trinity. If they did, they either meant these appellations to signify merely the different relations or characters in which God is to mankind, and so as signifying persons in what Waterland has called the theatrical, § or what is commonly called the Sabellian sense; or they meant (though not disallowing the use of the appellations in this sense, when used in speaking of our own relations to God) something more also. If they meant more than these relations, the use of the word person in a sense which confines it to these relations does not express their whole meaning: and therefore all criticism on the word in this sense goes for nothing in any inquiry into what their whole meaning really was.

Dr. Whately, it is to be farther observed, speaks of our notion of the doctrine of the Trinity as a “faint and imperfect notion,”^{||} and of the doctrine itself as being “except so far as relates to us, indistinctly explained.”^{*} You will already have seen, from what I have said in my first letter, that I account “indistinct” explanations in such a matter as this to be none at all. The only *explanation* of this doctrine which either is, or can be, given, is that which Dr. Whately has himself given in the sentence preceding that which I have last referred to; namely, that we have to “believe in God, who as the Father hath made us, and all the world; as the Son, hath redeemed us, and all mankind; as the Holy Ghost, sanctifieth us,” and so forth. Even this explanation is not precisely accurate, inasmuch as creation, not less than redemption, comes by the Son. But with this correction, a correction which I

* Whately's Logic, p. 326, 4th ed.

† Origen against Celsus, p. 386. Spencer's Edit.

|| Whately's Logic, p. 37.

† Ibid, p. 333.

§ Works, iii. 202.

* Ibid, p. 339.

will not undertake to exempt from any charge which may be made against it of hypercriticism, the explanation thus given has as clear a meaning as possible. And to this clear doctrine thus explained, Scripture adds nothing whatever, except the proposition that the relations thus explained possess that real, though incomprehensible, foundation in the Divine mind which they were stated in p. 67 to have. But this proposition, although *about* an incomprehensible or unexplainable matter, is not, as far as it goes, less distinct than the other.

NOTE F TO LETTER vii. p. 69.

Of the use of the words person and distinction in speaking of God or of the Divine nature.

To the statement made in this letter it is objected by the Unitarians, that to use the word person in a sense which affirms anything of a real distinction in the Divine nature is to make of the several persons separate beings or Gods. Of course also, to use the word personalization or personification, or any other equivalent expression or form of words, in the same sense, would seem to them liable to the same objection. They will allow these expressions to be used to signify a confessedly human arrangement or distribution of our own thoughts or conceptions of the one God, or of the divine power, or attribute, or quality personified; but they will allow no more. Anything more than this amounts, they say, to the multiplying God into more than one.*

But it amounts to no such thing. "The Father," says Hooker, "as goodness, the Son as wisdom, the Holy Ghost as power, do all concur in every outward particular issuing from that one only glorious Deity which they all are. For that which moveth God to work is goodness, that which ordereth his work is wisdom, and that which perfecteth his work is power."† There is not a doubt but that Hooker believed that there is a real foundation in the Divine mind for these distinctions. And why should there not be in the Divine mind? There is in the human. Goodness, wisdom, and power, and other human feelings or attributes which might be particularized, are as much distinct in man, as we ever suppose the divine persons to be distinct in God, and yet without compromising in any way our own unity, or individuality. Goodness, for example, is no less distinct from wisdom, than Peter is distinct from James, and yet this distinction is perfectly consistent with their being held to be existent in

* See Norton's Statement, p. 9.

† Eccl. Polity, v. clv. 5. Keble's edition; and compare the extract from Sherlock. Note p. 64.

the same mind. All that we affirm, all that the Scripture writers imply, of the distinctions between Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, may be comprehended in saying that, though we do not and cannot know *how* these relations or characters in which God exists to us, are either united or distinguished *in him*, we yet hold that both their union and their distinction are not less real in him, than the union and the distinction of power and wisdom and goodness in man.* *Not less real*, I say. And this is all I say. For the argument is not that, as the relations of Father to son, or to spirit, or as the relations of goodness to power and wisdom in man, so are the same relations in God. That is an argument which would not be valid if used in comparing men with the lower animals. Perhaps a very wanton scepticism might even deny its perfect applicability to all the different members and races of the human family. But the argument is that as these relations, or characters, or qualities, or we may even say differences, are real in man, and yet consistent with human individuality; so the analogous relations which exist also in God, may be, and as we are taught are, both equally real, and consistent with *his* individuality also. That the *mode* of their existence is the same in him and in us, or that they are either united or distinguished in him in the same *way*, we do not affirm. If we were to affirm anything on a point on which we are altogether ignorant, we should affirm the contrary.

But it may be worth while to discuss sentence by sentence much of the paragraph in which Mr. Norton animadverts on this doctrine of a *real* threefold distinction in the Godhead as a doctrine inconsistent with that of the unity.

Those who thus explain the word person he says [or those Trinitarians who "regard the three persons as denoting *the three relations* which God bears to men as their creator, redeemer, and sanctifier,"] maintain also "that those terms ought to be understood as affirming a real threefold distinction in the Godhead,"† or in the one God. So far is true. We Trinitarians do maintain that these terms ought so to be understood. "They themselves, however," Mr. Norton adds, "after giving this general statement, immediately relapse into the common belief;"‡ that is, into the belief, as this writer supposes, that the three persons designated by these terms are three separate beings, not less separate than three different men. "When they speak particularly of the Father, the Son, or

* It would be very hard to define *how* these characters are distinguished in man. Human power and human wisdom, for example, run much into each other. Much more hard, of course, or rather impossible, to mark out any bond of connection or line of difference in the nature of God. And accordingly the firmest Trinitarians often doubt whether to interpret of the Father, or the Son, or the Spirit, many texts of Scripture which they yet hold to refer to one, though they will not pronounce to which, of these three persons. Every attempt, moreover, which has ever been made to *explain* the case in any way, or to explain what we may perhaps call its physical or metaphysical process, as for instance by talking of an antiodosis or perichoresis, or communication of properties, is too utterly vain and valueless to be regarded.

† Statement of reasons, p. 9.

‡ Statement of reasons, pp. 9, 10.

the Spirit, they speak of each unequivocally as a person in the common sense of the word." What is here considered as the common sense of the word is that of their each possessing the same sort of individuality with, or an individuality which is analogous to, that of the separate individualities of different men. But this I deny: that is, I deny that Trinitarians speak of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, as possessing this sort of individuality. What they speak of is of distinctions analogous, so far as we venture to trace the analogy, to the distinctions which, although real in their nature, yet do *not* disturb human individuality. "They ascribe to them," Mr. Norton proceeds, "*personal* attributes, they speak of each as sustaining *personal* relations peculiar to himself, and performing *personal* actions, distinct from those of either of the others." But *this* attribution of person to God is only as power, wisdom, and goodness, have each its peculiar province of action or thought, or as *love* may prompt a man, and *skill* may enable him, to do any thing, and *perseverance* to carry it into effect. It does not touch the question in *what* the personalization is founded, or *how* it subsists; or rather the question whether it have a real basis, or not.—The next sentence is as follows. "It was the son who was sanctified, and sent into the world, and the Father by whom he was sanctified and sent." But no Trinitarian will accept this reference to St. John x. 36, any more than, as I should think, the Unitarian will accept it, as bearing on the case. That CHRIST was sanctified and sent, and that CHRIST is in some sense the Son of God, is what all allow: but that he was sanctified, as he was or is, the second person of the Trinity, is not the meaning of the verse, or at any rate is not assumed to be its meaning in this controversy. Or grant that this be its meaning, we may then expand, or paraphrase it, as follows:—"That although in humble acknowledgment of our inability to discern the eternal and invisible one, we venture not, even while we profess our belief in his existence and power, to attempt to form any conception of *what* he is essentially and originally, we yet are permitted, saving this confession, to recognise him also as existing in active, and practical communication with the world and mankind. But if we recognise him at all, it must be through human analogies. And, for this purpose, we are instructed to take up as the most suitable analogy, that of a son who speaks and acts in the name of his Father, a father far removed out of our sight, and with his Father's authority." No Trinitarian means, or can mean, more than this, in speaking of the distinction between the Father and the Son. Also, as the distinction cannot mean more than this, so neither is this, in any way, a greater distinction than those before alleged between goodness, wisdom, and power, of which it has been already shown that they are at once real distinctions, and also may co-exist in the same mind. If it be here objected that though doubtless the distinctions between wisdom, goodness, and power, are not less real than that between Father and Son, yet the distinctions of the one analogy are consistent

with, and that of the other inconsistent with, our own human individuality, the answer is obvious. The distinction between Father and Son is not inconsistent with that individuality of *nature* or *birth*, which affords us, as we suppose, our nearest attainable conception of the perfect unity between the visible and the invisible, between the essential Deity, and his manifestation in Christ.

Again, Mr. Norton proceeds:—"It was the son who became incarnate, and not the Father. It was the son who made atonement The son was in the bosom of the Father, but the Father was not in the bosom of the Son," and so forth. "Again, it was the Holy Spirit who was sent as the comforter, and not the Father nor the son."† In all these instances, as in the instance given in the preceding paragraph, we are speaking, so far as we speak of the persons in the Trinity, of the distinct acts, or energies of the one Eternal and Infinite, and invisible mind, and understand them in the same way.

"All this," adds Mr. Norton; that is, all this doctrine of the incarnation and other acts or attributes both of the son, and of the spirit, "those who assert the doctrine of three distinctions, but not of three persons" [that is, not three persons in this writer's sense of three separate beings or individualities] "in the divine nature, must and do say and allow: and therefore they do in fact maintain with other Trinitarians that there are three divine persons, in the proper sense of the word, distinguished from each other." But this they do not maintain, in the sense here ascribed to the word by Mr. Norton, namely, that each person is a separate being. All that they maintain is, that we are to God in these three relations, and in relations which have a real foundation in him: that is, a foundation which we suppose to be not less real, and which we do not suppose to be, and which indeed cannot be, more real, than those which subsist between the separate feelings and powers, moral and intellectual of the human mind.

"The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," thus Mr. Norton goes on to say in a following sentence, "is an intelligent being, a person." "The son of God is," also, "an intelligent being, a person." Doubtless we consider them so to be. "And no Christian," it then follows, "can doubt that these two persons are not the same. Neither of them, therefore, is a mere distinction of the divine nature, nor the same intelligent being regarded under different distinctions."‡

In regard to this remark, it is to be observed that inasmuch as this title of Son of God, or of a Divine person, when used of CHRIST, is complicated with his assumption of humanity, I must of course here omit all comment on it, as used of HIM. But in the doctrine of the Trinity, the word *person*, and the words *distinction of the divine nature*, have the same meaning precisely. According to the logic of the case, it therefore signifies not in the least which word we use, although there are many

† Statement as before, p. 10.

‡ Ibid. p. 11.

reasons which I need not here assign, for giving the preference to the word person for common use.

The author concludes the paragraph with saying that he will not produce examples of what the substitution would be, supposing it to be made in Scripture, of the term distinction of the divine nature, in the place of the words Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, "because it would appear like turning the Scriptures into burlesque." And so it would, but for reasons altogether foreign to his argument, which is, I think, a *petitio principii* from beginning to end. The *petitio* is this: that the word person, or the word distinction if used as its equivalent, cannot be intelligibly used, as significative of a real difference, and at the same time in a sense consistent with the undisturbed unity or individuality of nature or mind; than which no assumption, as seems to me, can be more gratuitous, or more easily refuted. It is moreover an assumption, or error, which I know not that any of the Unitarian writers escapes. In a recent work by Mr. Barling it is stated (p. 186, 187) that any three subjects in which the properties of will, understanding, and other mental affections are supposed to inhere, "are the same to our conceptions as three beings, three natures, three essences;" and therefore necessarily in this case, according to this writer's view of it, the same as three Gods.

Let us then take for our subjects three men, James, Peter, and John. Let the nature or essence of the first be goodness, of the second wisdom, of the third power.* Each of the three may have will, each of them may have understanding (I here take the word understanding in the sense of a discernment of the way to carry into effect the counsels of wisdom), and each of them may be capable of other mental affections. Every one will allow this in the case of these three men, who are clearly three. But the philosophy of the case is not altered in the least, though we suppose the goodness, the wisdom, and the power, instead of being divided among three different men to be inherent in one;—and so also not less clearly in the case of God.

NOTE G.—See pp. 49, 52, 53, 54.

Of the identity of meaning in the words unity and consentience when spoken of God.

See on this subject Paley's *Natural Theology*, in which the argument from unity of design is the only argument, as far as I recollect, for the divine unity which he brings forward, or appears to recognize. And indeed there is no other. On the doctrine that "God does not come

* See the extract from Hooker, p. 98.

under number," as stated by the Fathers, see Mr. Newman's notes in the Library of the Fathers, vol. xix. pp. 400, 452. "This repetition of unities," says Boethius, "is iteration, rather than numeration."* See also Tertullian as referred to by Bishop Kaye, p. 453. "Conveniens enim et quodammodo injecta manu detinens adversarii sensum non negantis creatorem Deum justissime præscribo illi, diversitati locum non esse inter eos, qui ex æquo deos confessus non potest facere diversos, non quia non homines licet sub eadem appellatione diversissimos esse, sed quia Deus non erit dicendus, quia nec credendus, nisi summum magnum."†—Hartley, (Part ii. ch. ii. Prop. 5) says as follows: "For if we suppose more than one [God] it is plain, since the attributes of infinite power, knowledge, and goodness, include all possible perfection, that they must be entirely alike to each other, without the least possible variation. They will therefore entirely coalesce in our idea; i. e. be one to us." So also Wollaston. "If there could be two beings each by himself absolutely perfect, they must be either of the same, or different natures. Of the *same* they cannot be, because thus both being infinite, their existence would be coincident, that is they would be the same, or one."‡ See also Waterland: "But where the substance is neither separate nor separable, as in the Divine persons, there unity of *kind* and *number* are consistent, and meet in one."§

From this statement, which is assuredly quite incontestible, the two conclusions which I shall here subjoin clearly follow.

I. That it is a statement which at once manifests the error, and shews a way of escape out of all the worst mischief, of the Arian scheme of the Son's Divinity. The son, according to this scheme, is said to be a creature. If a creature, and also God, or a God, it can only be in the secondary sense in which the word God is used in Psalm lxxxii. 6, and elsewhere. No folly can be greater than that of calling the son God in any such sense as this, and yet still contending that he is one in nature with the Supreme. If the distinction between the creator and the created be not accounted of as implying a difference of nature, or substance, or essence, or whatever other word we use, it can have no meaning at all.¶ The creator, excluding, what is not here to the purpose, all consideration of the creation out of nothing, always is, and must be, to the thing created exactly in the same relation in which the machinist is to his machine. If the creator may be present with the thing created, so may

* *Trinus et unus Deus*, *ibid.*

† *Against Marcion*, l. 6.

‡ *Religion of Nature*, Sect. v. §§. vii.

§ *Works*, vol. iii. p. 61. Compare also vol. ii. p. 671, and vol. iii. pp. 235, 236, as referred to in Barling's *Review of Trinitarianism*, pp. 40, 41.

¶ I must nevertheless add here, in reference to what is said in Letter II, that I do not see that it is any way impossible, although it is doubtless very foolish, to imagine even a created God, or a created Infinite. That one principle which we cannot limit *may not* create another which we cannot limit is too much to affirm. See pp. 24, 25, of the preceding letters.

the machinist be present in his machine. If the machine can be set to go by itself, so, we may imagine, may the thing created. But there is no medium to our conceptions between the one and the other. We *must* speak either of the machinist, or of the machine. And if it be said that either the creator or the machinist may be present by an agent, this assertion, how gifted soever that agent may be, does not carry with it any the least meaning, that either the creator or the machinist is present himself. The cause, as I apprehend, which led both the Arians of the fourth, and also those of the last, century into their confusions on this point was, that, in their imperfect metaphysics, they thought, or rather fancied, or tried to fancy, that they might account of the Son and the Spirit as creatures in some sense, and yet not in the same sense in which they used the word creature in speaking of every thing else. But then if they did not use it in this sense, which is its only sense, they used it in no sense at all. The Arians fell into exactly the same error in speaking of a son who was a creature, and yet not a creature, into which the Athanasians fell in speaking of a procession from the Father, before all time, or in eternity. And the reason why no logic could ever reconcile their disputes, was because they had not any meaning which could be amenable to it.

The Arian error is, therefore, I think perfectly clear. But then still, if the unity of the Infinite be, as it has here been shewn to be, the same with its consentience, and its consentience of course the same with its unity, much of the mischief of this error will be escaped or mitigated. If, or so far as, the Arians, though using the word creature in its common and only sense in speaking of the son, yet still conceived of him as consentient with the Father, and also as Infinite, the Father and the Son were to them, not less than to the Athanasians, one and the same. Of course I use the word Infinite both here and elsewhere in that only sense which our human faculties can affix to it: namely as denoting a power or perfection to which we are unable to assign limit, or bound. I do not mean to affirm that the Arian may not at times have been led to imagine that the Father was greater than the Son. If he created the Son, so far, doubtless, he was supposed to be the greater. Thus far there is a very intelligible relation of superior and inferior, if we stop here. But the moment we superadd Infinity to the Son's attributes, the difference vanishes. As in the fable, when Jupiter and Mercury travelled together, Philemon, so long as they spoke and acted exactly alike, could not have discerned the supremacy of the one over the other.—Wherefore no numerical division which may be affirmed of the infinite and consentient is, or can be, in point of real intellectual meaning, any division of unity. This truth many of the ancients, Arians as well as Athanasians, must have seen clearly, and also many of those elder heretics as they are called, who were reproached with holding that the names of the three persons of the Godhead might be used interchangeably. Their

perception of the perfect consentience of these persons must have been at the root, beyond all doubt, of this imputation. And in the same manner the same principle must have been also at the root of Roscelin's assertion, if indeed he ever asserted, that the existence of three Gods might be asserted with truth.* That great philosopher could not have made any such affirmation with any other meaning than this. Wherefore even the error of the Arians in accounting of the Son as a creature may thus be reduced to an error in language alone, to a defect of that simplicity with which the one God is best worshipped in words which not only have no other meaning than unity, but which also address him as ONE.

I do not mean that this error of theirs was a slight error. No error, as I have observed in p. 53, can be slight which intercepts anything of either the noble conception, or the grateful humility, in which we are taught to look up in sole dependence to the one creator, redeemer, and sanctifier, as the one Lord of all. But though I do not consider this error of the Arians as a slight error, even when thus interpreted at its best, we should yet forbear to exaggerate it. It is still an incomparably less error than that polytheism of the Roman Catholic, which deifies saints, or than the no less, if not still more, mischievous error of many other self-deceivers, who substitute an idolatry of barren, or even of false doctrines, in God's place.

II. Thus much of the effect of this principle, in mitigating the great error of what I still do not scruple to call the Arian idolatry. I now add that the same principle furnishes also a no less consoling alleviation of the heathen polytheism itself. Many Christian divines, jealous for the prerogative of God's surpassing mercy in Christ, have often been disposed to censure what they have regarded as a tendency to think somewhat too well of the religious belief of the heathen sages. In our own country, and in the last age, Sykes, Cudworth, and Gataker, to whose names many others might be easily added, incurred very generally this reproach. And, in particular reference to the doctrine of the unity here before us, Leland, than whom I know not that a writer at once more learned and more judicious ever existed, observes of all these writers that they have omitted to discriminate between the error of worshipping *the* Gods, and the truth and duty of worshipping that one God who is above all. There *is* doubtless this discrimination between the Heathens, and the Christian, and I do not underrate it. But if, as has here been shewn, the divine unity is nothing else than a divine consentience, and if, moreover, or so far as, it be also believed, as many of the heathens did believe, that "all is right and well which the Gods please to give," and "that they never do wrong willingly or unwillingly,"† this is still a near approach to the doctrine of the unity, and takes off all the worst mischief of

* Mosheim, vol. i. p. 548, quarto Edition.

† Cice de Legibus, li. 7, and Antoninus, x. 1, and xii. 12, quoted by Leland, on the advantages of the Christian Revelation, l. 266, 263.

even idolatry. The polytheism of all who believe this is reduced to little else than a nominal polytheism, is much more innocent than that of him who either threatens our Lady of Embrun, or desires to bribe our Lady of Walsingham, into the grant of favours which they would not dare to ask of the Supreme; or than that of believing that the kindness and mercy of Christ is any other, or any way more compassionate, than that of the Father himself. "The applying to the Gods," says Leland, "what though true is true of the one God alone, spoils the force of the reasoning, and the beauty of a noble sentiment."* This is true; but if the virus of polytheism can be reduced to only this, we may still be permitted to hold to the doctrine of the Fathers, that wisdom or philosophy was in a degree, and even in a great degree, to the Greeks what revelation itself was and is, to Christians and Jews.

The actual case, or position, in which the heathens were in respect of this doctrine, was, and must have been, as I apprehend, nearly as follows. Men, both before Christ's coming, and after, who saw through the folly of the vulgar polytheism, and who yet could not fail to see the indications of mind in the works of creation, imbibed generally, perhaps almost universally, the belief that this mind pervaded the mass, that it was the soul, and I do not suppose that they would any of them have had any objection to call it the God, of the world. To all who believed that this soul, this God, or this vital energy was a designer, this belief was a theism, was that only foundation of all religious hope and dependence, which without revelation man can possess. But then there were many also, very many, I fear, who, though they allowed in words the existence of this God, or soul, or divine mind, yet accounted of it in thought as nothing but a sort of blind nature, or plastic necessity, born with creation and one with it, but altogether impersonal. And these were Atheists. *Nomine relinquebant Deos, re tollebant.* Though, with the example before their eyes of the fate which Socrates had brought on himself by very slight imprudence, they would not oppose the popular superstitions,† yet inwardly they decried the foundation not less than the superstructure. This, I believe, was very often the state of the case, and a state of it which it is very painful to contemplate.

But still this could not have been its state consistently and altogether. The belief that the soul of the Deity came out really and truly in those manifestations of it which they called Gods was also a real belief. The principle of piety is too deeply imbedded in the mind to be altogether overrun or overgrown by any mere talk of nature or chance. The sublime, and even to ourselves the affecting expressions in which Cleanthes, and Socrates, and Cicero, academic as he was, and Antoninus, and many other philosophers, have spoken of the Gods, were not, and could not have been without a meaning, to which their own hearts must have truly

* Leland, *Ibid.* p. 264.

† See Leland, p. 273.

responded. Neither is it less certain that so far as these Gods were consentient, they were the one God. See, in reference to the ancient notions of Deity, the learned note on the word Deus, by Professor Norton, at the conclusion of his work on the Genuineness of the Gospels.

NOTE H.—See p. 82.

Of the Evidence of Miracles, as affected by the doctrine of the Divine mind stated before.

I have stated in Letter IX. to which I here refer, what I suppose to be incontestible reasons why miracles should have composed a part of the Christian system, why, even as matter of *doctrine*, it would have been incomplete without them. As they are matters of *evidence*, they do not come properly before me in these letters. But still, inasmuch as the evidence itself of their real performance, appears to me to be made much the more incontestible by its connection with the doctrine of the divine mind, I will beg leave to subjoin here a few words on this subject also.

I begin with observing, that I allow, and think, that every claim whatever of miraculous power, not known to proceed from a previously acknowledged superhuman authority, ought always to be received with great distrust. Such, and so great is the vulgar love of believing, not only without evidence, but even (though I do not mean to tax Tertullian with this folly) *quia incredibile est*, that any claim of miracles, which may happen to run along with the tide of popular superstition or folly, is justly exposed to serious distrust. And this moreover is the case in which they are commonly claimed. I believe that there exist, in all ages, countries and populations, in which even a good and able man might possibly delude himself into the belief that he possessed the power of working them. I apprehend that Wesley, a man both of great goodness, and of great abilities, believed this of himself; and it is very imaginable to me that his followers, not after the lapse of a century, but even within a very few years after his death, might easily, with ever so little more colouring than they had, or thought themselves to have had for this error, have swelled his acts into an absolute heap of miracles. And this I think they might have done out of no worse principle than their natural love of the marvellous, and their pious desire to have as

much as possible of a good thing. This same principle, also, not a worse, is, I suppose, the nucleus of most of the Romish miracles; and I could almost fancy that if the late Dr. Chalmers had believed that he worked miracles, half Scotland, in its present mood, would have believed that it saw, and would have died to attest them. These considerations do, as I readily confess, throw in my mind, and I suppose in the minds of most dispassionate observers, so much discredit on all *ordinary* claims of miracles, that if we could not discriminate the Christian from almost all others, I should hardly know what to think of the external proofs, strong as they are, on which they are commonly rested. But then we *do* discriminate them, and this, as partly by showing the calm and holy perfection of the Christian doctrine itself, or by combining the internal with the external evidence, so partly, and also very importantly, by shewing that the doctrine of Christ was not a doctrine which suited itself to the follies and superstitions of the Jewish mind: that though he came in fulfilment of the prophecies which had announced a Messiah, he yet did not appear as the Messiah whom the Jews expected, and that the religion which even his personal disciples looked for from him was a very different religion from that which he taught. Wherefore *his* miracles had not that fanaticism in their favour which pursued Wesley and Chalmers, and which pursues every man who chimes in, especially if he chime in in good faith, with popular prepossession and folly, and which is not ever enlisted in behalf of any merely true and rational cause. Consequently, we argue, and argue fairly, that nothing less than the reality of the Christian miracles could have established the belief of them in the disciples' minds.

This is the common argument, on which I need not enlarge. But to this it is to be added, that the existence, or as I rather believe, the prevalence, at the time of the first teaching of Christianity, and both among Gentiles and Jews, of the doctrine of the divine mind, or of that connection between God and nature in which it subsists, is a very material point in the same case. This connection, or supposed connection, between God and nature, is not, indeed, anything of a proof against *our* miracles. Butler and others have, I suppose, shewn sufficiently, that miracles may under certain contingencies be provided, or allowed for, in the course of nature itself: and if they must be imagined to be in any proper sense *violations*, as they have sometimes been called, of that order, the order of God, they would scarcely be credible. But although thus miracles are not really or necessarily inconsistent with the order of nature, and although that order may indeed in certain cases absolutely require them, yet the observation of, and the belief in, the great regularity which that order commonly exhibits, tends rightly and necessarily to rouse a *prima facie* incredulity in regard to all apparent interruptions of it. Therefore, also, the belief of that same doctrine of the divine mind which is supposed to go always or usually along with that

order, and in the same regularity with it, must tend also to create the same incredulity. And accordingly there is nothing of which both the history and the relics of ancient learning and literature assure us more clearly than that the belief of this doctrine among the ancients always did in fact indispose, as far as it went, the minds of those who held it, to the belief of all miracles not pressed on them by evidences or prepossessions too strong to resist. There is nothing which we know better, than that the Greek historians and philosophers, and even tragedians, were led by their general reception of this doctrine, either to reject, or rationalize, or allegorize, all those mythical, and fabulous relations of heroes and gods which had come down to them from elder times. Scarcely any modern sceptic would have looked with more distrust at a miracle said to have happened in his own age, or under his own eye, than Herodotus himself, lover of fable as that great writer has been often called; candid as I should call him in not resolutely rejecting those fables which his education and circumstances had not furnished him, as ours has furnished us, with sufficient light to dissipate; and in not despising authority, of which though it led him wrong, he was not to be expected to see the fallacy.

Thus much of the heathen. But the same disposition would necessarily be the disposition of all those Jews also, who might have imbibed either the same or a similar doctrine from those sources, whatever they were (some there must have been) to which we owe its introduction into the book of Proverbs, or the book of Wisdom, or into the writings of Philo. If therefore, we find, as I think is incontestible, that St. John, and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and, if St. Paul did not write that epistle, St. Paul, I think, also, were themselves imbued in any degree with this sort of philosophy, or had had it brought before their eyes, and not wholly rejected it, they also must have partaken of the same disposition. Whatever predisposition may have existed among the Jews in general to believe in Christ's miracles without adequate evidence, these apostolical writers, in the case supposed, would not have shared, or rather would have been rendered by the holding of those opinions the less likely to share it, and are therefore the more unimpeachable judges or witnesses of them. And the case is the same also with respect to all those of the rationalizing Jews, who instead of being Christ's disciples were his enemies. Any very vehement and un instructed enemy might, I will allow, have been ready enough to have admitted the performance of the miracles, even though they were not truly performed, and to have ascribed them to magic, or Beelzebub. But any philosopher, or philosophizer, Pharisee, or Sadducee, who might have been led by whatever cause either to identify, or to harmonise, the law or wisdom of nature, or of the world, with the Divinity which lives and is exerted in it, would have felt differently. Incredulity, not credulity, would have been *his* tendency, as is sufficiently manifest from John ix.

13, sq. and Acts iv. 16;* and therefore Christ's miracles, however easy the possession which they may have taken of some minds, must have been subjected in many to a more searching criticism than is always supposed. Exactly as any pretence to miracles in our own time and country, although it might find in one class of the community very willing believers, would yet be resisted, and indeed exploded, by another. This is one benefit, direct or contingent, which we, I think, clearly derive from the diffusion of this doctrine of the divine or universal mind, or of the doctrine of the connexion between God and nature, throughout the ancient world.

* See also Acts xxiii. 8. There is a very remarkable passage in Justin Martyr, which Le Clerc supposes to refer to the Sadducees, and which I may translate as follows:— "The Father, they say, emits his own power when he pleases, and when he pleases retracts it; and it is thus that he makes angels, but without severing them from himself." Against Trypho, p. 358, Paris ed. Eccl. Hist. Prolegomena, Sect. i. iii. 6. This indisposition to sever even the angels from God, would have led to deny, as indeed we know that it did lead many to deny, their existence, if the belief had not been too rooted to overcome. I may also add, in reference to the general argument of these letters, that it would have led still more decidedly to reject the doctrine of the personal existence of the word if that doctrine also had not been a rooted belief.





